HOME AND SCHOOL SERIES

Betty Maxine Hall

6 mai 1935.

SHE SAT DOWN TO REST ON A STILE.

THE DOINGS OF DENYS

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"THE BOYS OF ALL SAINTS"
"BERTHA'S FIRST TERM"
"SID'S PICKLE"

THE WORLD SYNDICATE
PUBLISHING COMPANY
Cleveland . New York

Reprinted in the United States by special arrangement
with the English Publishers

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The World Syndicate Publishing Co.

Printed in the United States of America
by
THE COMMERCIAL BOOKBINDING CO.
CLEVELAND, O.

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THE DOINGS OF DENYS

CHAPTER I

MISCHIEF

"I shall slap you in a minute, Tony, if you don't stand still."

Tony received the remark without perturbation.

"Mother doesn't allow you to slap us."

"Mother doesn't allow you to be naughty," retorted Denys; "these strings of yours are always getting into knots. Buttons would be ever so much better."

"You tied the strings yourself."

"Very likely I did," Denys answered crossly, "but you have been racketing round in them all day. I never did see such a boy. Jerry

doesn't take half the time to get to bed, and I've all my lessons to do!"

"Jerry oughtn't to, he's only half the size of me," said Tony unanswerably. "Look here, Denys, this will do the trick. You hold tight, and I'll wriggle."

"Don't!" screamed Denys.

But Tony had already wriggled, and somehow it did do the trick, the obstinate knot relaxed, the strings slipped loose, and Denys stood with the white flannel front in her hand, while Tony doubled himself up with laughter at the other side of the nursery.

Denys suddenly recovered her usual good temper, and joined in the laugh, and Tony's undressing was finished in a whirlwind of frolic and laughing.

He was capering about in his sleeping-suit when the door opened, and a girl appeared, her arms full of books, which she tossed on to the table.

"Denys! if you put these children to bed, I do wish you would do it earlier. The nursery is supposed to be clear by seven o'clock, and it's twenty minutes past now.

You may scramble through your lessons if you like, but I can't. I've my future to think of."

"We've finished, Gertrude," said Denys. "Come along, Tony-man. Softly now, don't wake Jerry."

"*He* won't be asleep." Tony thrust his bare feet into his slippers, festooned a dressing-gown over his shoulders in an airy fashion, and skipped upstairs.

As he entered the night nursery a curly little head was lifted from the crib in the corner.

"Pooh!" cried Tony, "I knew he would be awake."

"Hullo, Denys!" said a very unsleepy voice.

Denys crossed to the crib, and bent over to kiss the chubby face.

"You ought to be asleep," she said fondly; "shut your eyes tight."

Jerry's brown eyes were screwed up obediently, and, with a good-night kiss to each little brother, Denys went back to the nursery.

Gertrude was buried in her books, and

Denys moved about quietly, emptying water, hanging up towels, and folding the small garments that lay scattered round.

"I shall be glad when you've finished rushing about so," observed Gertrude. "I must say, Denys, I don't think much of your management. I'd clear those children off to bed in double-quick time, and make them put away their things, too—or, if they didn't, their clothes could just stay where they were till the morning. They will all be wanted again then."

Denys glanced round the now tidy room. She could never settle down to her lessons in a litter. She did not reply, however—a little sound had come down the stairs to her quick ear.

"Den—ys! Den—ys!"

Denys ran softly up to the night nursery.

"I'm not asleep yet," came Jerry's gentle little voice.

"You mustn't call, darling."

"Well! will you come up in ten minutes, and just see if I'm asleep?"

"Very well," agreed Denys.

She went back to the nursery and got out her lessons, and began copying into her exercise-book the sums she had done in pencil in the afternoon Preparation at school. When the clock on the stairs chimed the three-quarters she went up again to peep at Jerry.

He was fast asleep, one little hand tucked under his rosy cheek, the other still holding a woolly dog, his chief treasure just at present.

Denys stood looking at him as he lay in the radiance of the summer sunset, which had crept in between the edge of the blind and the window-frame. How utterly peaceful he looked! She knew he had gone to sleep, firm in his belief that she would keep her promise, and come up and look at him again.

She had not long been settled to her lessons once more, when her mother came into the nursery—her pretty, fragile little mother!

Both girls glanced up with a smile to greet her entrance, and she stood between them with a hand on the shoulder of either.

"Father is going to read to me for a little while. Baby is asleep, but you will listen for

her, won't you, Denys? I shouldn't hear her through the reading if she woke."

"Denys is sure to hear," said Gertrude, staying her map-painting to gaze critically at her work; "she runs up to Jerry every ten minutes."

There was nothing in her tone, but Denys flushed up redly, and there was a moment's pause. Mrs. Brougham's hand rested a trifle more heavily on Denys's shoulder.

"We must not spoil Jerry," she said.

After that Denys's work was merely mechanical. She copied figures without the slightest idea of what they meant. Her mind was in a turmoil of anger against Gertrude—there was even a faint resentment against her mother, which surprised herself. She had been surprised at herself several times lately. She was not used to being vexed with her mother, nor to being so out of patience with Tony as to propose slapping him. As to being angry with Gertrude, such a thing had certainly occurred before, but she acknowledged to herself that lately Gertrude was constantly annoying her. She seemed to put

her word into everything, not aggressively or openly, as it were, but with a half word of wonder here, or a suggestion of something to be changed there. Yet she did not seem either to suggest or to have new ideas, but the results were the same. Nothing seemed to go as smoothly or as well as it used to go. Denys said to herself drearily that perhaps it was because Gertrude was growing up.

Gertrude was nearly fifteen, while Denys had lately passed her seventeenth birthday. Between them came Conway, and below Gertrude were twelve-year-old Willie, Tony, Jerry, and the baby.

As the two girls sat side by side they made a pretty contrast.

Denys had bright brown hair, tinged with a dash of red-gold, hair which curled naturally wherever it got a chance, and which was decorously tied back with a ribbon. Her eyes were brown and clear, and her face very pleasant and cheerful. Gertrude, on the other hand, was really good-looking, with a mop of very dark curly hair, dark eyes, and a bright colour.

It was tacitly agreed among them that the family "genius" had passed Denys by and settled on Gertrude. Gertrude accepted the position calmly, and rather as a matter of course.

It was a standing family joke that a friend had once said to Conway that he supposed Gertrude was the cleverest one of them all.

When Conway repeated this remark at dinner one Sunday, Gertrude's answer had been characteristic.

"Oh yes!" she said, "I have heard that before. Of course, it is very surprising, but several people have said so!"

Nor did the laughter round the table discompose her. Of course, if a person *was* clever, laughing did not alter the fact, and it was all the better for her future. People who were not clever had not much chance now-a-days, in Gertrude's opinion.

CHAPTER II

WANTED—A CHANGE

At school, the next day, Denys's friend, Pauline Stacey, slipped her arm through hers.

"What is the matter with you, Denys?"

"Nothing!" said Denys.

"You look as if you would like to do something to somebody."

"How ridiculous!" laughed Denys; "not but what," she added, more gravely, "I did feel like giving poor Tony a slap last night. He would not stand still, and his strings got all in a knot, and I was in a hurry to get him to bed and do my lessons, and then there was the nursery to tidy."

Pauline stared.

"Do you have to do all that sort of thing, looking after children and housework?" she said. "I don't! Why, I should not dream of doing anything except my lessons, and mother would not think of asking me either. I would not neglect my lessons for anything."

"I don't neglect mine," Denys answered a little proudly; she was vexed that she had been enticed into mentioning home doings.

"Well, not *neglect*, of course," acknowledged Pauline; "but I think it is too bad that you should work like that; you want rest and change. I would not dream of doing it. It's quite too bad. Does Gertrude do housework and dress children—or perhaps she cooks?"

In spite of her vexation Denys burst out laughing.

"Gertrude!" she echoed. "Gertrude is like you, she never dreams."

But though Denys laughed, the vexation remained. The mischief in Pauline's careless words worked.

That was how outsiders looked at her life, then!

It must be very nice in the mornings to only

get up just in time for breakfast, and not to have to dress two little boys and amuse baby till mother came down. It must be nice to find the breakfast all daintily laid, without need of reminding Lizzie of the salt and the teapot and the butter.

It would be so nice if they could have the help of an older servant. A woman servant would do twice as much work as foolish little Lizzie, but her wages would be twice as much as Lizzie's, and that was a consideration. Of course, her mother could not help these things; she worked beyond her strength already, but it *was* very hard to have her say, "We must not spoil Jerry!"

Besides, Gertrude had "a future," and Conway would have a future directly; boys always did. She was the only one without a future.

As she sat at her lessons alone in the nursery that evening one disagreeable thought after another came to her mind, till there seemed to be nothing pleasant in her life at all.

Well, there was one thing pleasant. It was Saturday to-morrow, and Conway would

be home from the Grammar School till Monday—Conway and Willie—and then Denys's face suddenly lightened, and she lifted her head to listen. Was that Jerry's little voice calling to her?

It was. Denys rose and passed swiftly up the stairs, swiftly but very softly, for Gertrude was practising in the drawing-room, and she did not want Gertrude to hear her.

Gertrude, however, heard, for she had ears like a hare. She had felt a little conscience-stricken over her remarks about Denys's going up to Jerry "every ten minutes," but here was proof positive of the fact that Denys went up to Jerry after he was supposed to be asleep.

Gertrude devoted herself exclusively to her lessons and her music, and in her heart looked down a little on Denys, who had so little ambition, and just accomplished the lessons she was obliged to do to keep up in her classes, and who moiled and toiled over the children, and spent her Saturdays cooking and mending, and generally helping the household where the mother was very far from strong, where the children were many, and the little maid-of-all-

work was a slip of a girl scarcely a year older than Gertrude herself.

If it occurred to Gertrude occasionally that she might help a little, too, she put the suggestion resolutely away. She had her future to think of, and if she chanced to have an idle half-hour at any time, Herr Joachim was always urging the claims of the piano. As for Gertrude's Saturdays, they were quite full. She took the morning for practising and study, and in the afternoon it was surely not unreasonable if she kept herself free for tennis or hockey! When any one studied as hard as she did change of thought and exercise were quite necessary, and Saturday evening was only too short for mending her clothes.

Gertrude always considered herself in the right, and her content with herself was rarely disturbed. This had been one of the rare occasions, and when Denys's footsteps passed up the stairs a triumphant little smile curved Gertrude's lips. She had been unquestionably right this time.

Up in the night nursery Denys bent over

Jerry's crib, and the little soft arms crept up round her neck.

"I do love you, Denys. That's what I called you for."

"And I love you," she whispered back. Great scalding tears rose in her eyes as her mother's words came back to her.

"We must not spoil Jerry!"

Her mother would never have said it, or thought it but for two or three mischievous little words Gertrude had let drop lately.

The next day brought Conway and Willie and a glare of lovely summer sunshine.

The hot afternoon was already well on its way when Denys found herself with a few minutes to spare. Not a few minutes only, but a whole hour. Mr. Brougham had taken the smaller boys to see a cricket match, Conway was presumably with them, Gertrude always went off to tennis, Mrs. Brougham had gone upstairs to get a little sleep after a disturbed night with baby, and baby, safely tucked in her perambulator, was taking the air under the proud guardianship of Lizzie, who had cleared up her work in unprecedented

good time to earn the treat.

Denys had the making of an interesting blouse on hand, and as she returned from making a few purchases she thought of its dainty frills. A whole hour's work would do wonders to them! But a turn in the garden path brought her face to face with Conway.

"Hullo, Denys!" he said. "Come and sit under the trees; I want to talk to you."

"Aren't you going to the match?" asked Denys, thinking of her blouse. "Anyhow, I can't come down the garden. I must listen for the door-bell, and I have to set the tea presently. Lizzie has taken baby for a good long walk."

"Gertrude can answer the door, and get the tea, too," decreed Conway.

"But Gertrude is out."

"Oh no, she isn't! It was too hot for her ladyship. You get your work—I know you won't be happy without it—and I'll settle Gertrude."

Denys went for her blouse. She particularly disliked dressmaking in the garden, everything blew about so, but she liked pleasing

Conway, and she knew that a boy's confidence once disdained, is not always to be had another time. So she gathered her work things without a sign of unwillingness, and added three or four cushions and a rug to the pile on her arm. Boys like to be comfortable.

Conway found Gertrude in the drawing-room.

"Here, Gertrude!" he said. "Denys is going out with me, and you must listen for the door-bell and get the tea. Lizzie is out."

Gertrude glanced up from her book.

"I'm not going to listen for any bells," she said; "you can count that I am at tennis. And as for getting the tea, I certainly shan't do that. If Denys wants the tea laid, she should keep Lizzie at home to do it."

"Do you mean that you absolutely refuse, then?"

Gertrude hesitated. She foresaw that Conway's request would sound reasonable enough if brought to the judgment of mother or father.

"I think it is too bad," she burst out. "I don't see why I should have to work all the afternoon! It is just like Denys, to send

Lizzie out and put the work on me. She should have looked after baby herself, and let Lizzie stop in. It's so nice for everybody to go out and let Gertrude do the work!"

"Delightful!" assented Conway, gravely. "It is a good thing there are to be changes."

Changes! Denys caught the last word. What did Conway mean?

CHAPTER III

THE PARTING OF THE WAY

Conway settled himself on the rug and cushions Denys had provided, and lay looking up at the blue sky for a long time in silence.

Denys glanced at him once or twice, wondering if he had meant anything special by his talk of "changes." What changes could come to their quiet life of eating and sleeping and rising, of studying and practising and sewing, save that one day soon Conway would go to business, and she herself would leave school, and give all her time to her mother and the children.

She was absorbed in planning how she should arrange her day under these circumstances, when Conway spoke at last.

"I am not going back to the School next term."

Denys turned a delighted face.

"Then you are going to business," she said. "How nice! And we shall have you at home every evening."

Conway looked pleased. It would be something to remember that Denys was glad to have him home every night, but his next words drove all the gladness from Denys's face.

"Dad has arranged for me to go to Germany for a year to learn the language, and then I shall come back to business."

"To Germany!" gasped Denys. "Oh, Conway!"

"It's awfully good of Dad to manage it, and awfully nice for me," said Conway.

"For you—yes!" said Denys, drearily; "but a whole year!"

She paused. Five minutes before she had been thinking how little could happen to change her life, and now a rush of possibilities swept over her.

Her eyes filled with tears.

"Suppose you never come back!" she said,

falteringly.

Conway almost smiled, but he saw her trouble was very real, and he slipped his hand through her arm, and squeezed it affectionately.

"Cheer up, old girl! I hope I shall come back all right, and, anyway, we shall meet up there." He glanced at the fleecy clouds in the deep blue sky above—"at least," he sat up suddenly, and leaned towards her, and his voice changed. "Denys," he said softly, "may I say it just this once? You know how I am always longing for you to give yourself to Jesus. Won't you, Denys dear? Then, whatever happened to either of us, we should be sure to meet."

Denys shook her head slowly.

"I should like to be good like you are, but not good like Gertrude," she said. "I don't want to talk about it."

Conway was silent. Gertrude had become a Christian before any of them, and yet, looking from week to week on her self-centred life, Conway could not help wondering how much place Christ had in her heart. He knew

his own faults, his own shortcomings very well, he knew he did truly try to fight against them; he could remember a few victories, and many failures. He had not spoken too gently to Gertrude, only half-an-hour before! It might be that Gertrude tried to please Jesus Christ more than he had even given her credit for; but Denys looked at the failing faulty servants, and not at the great Captain of their salvation. He hardly knew how to answer her, and he sent up a quick prayer that the Holy Spirit might teach him what to say. He could not let the question drop there.

"We don't do the Lord Jesus much credit, I know," he said humbly, "but He knew that when He died for us. He knew we should have to say, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Don't think about us, Denys dear, think of Him, He has the words of eternal life."

"I wish you would not talk about it," said Denys uneasily; "you know I've asked you not, so many times, and I don't want to be cross to you. You are going away."

"Yes," said Conway—he was very much

in earnest—"I am going away. Will you do something for me, Denys, while I am away? Will you ask God, every day, to give you His Holy Spirit?"

"I know I shan't remember, so it's no use promising."

"But you will ask God to take care of me, won't you? You won't forget me?"

"Forget you! Oh, Conway!"

"Then put the two things together," answered Conway softly, "will you, Denys?"

Denys paused, half frightened. What unknown thing would this prayer bring her? She did not want any changes in her life or her feelings. She was very fairly content as she was. She would have liked to refuse Conway, but he was going away, and she could not frame her lips to say, "I won't promise."

Instead, she said, very low, "I'll try, Conway!"

Before Conway could reply, Gertrude's unwelcome voice broke in upon them.

"So this is where you went out with Denys!" she said, standing behind them, and looking down on them. "I came to tell you I was going

out now—properly—to tea—but I've set the tea for you, and it's perfectly ridiculous, Denys, the time that Lizzie takes to laying the tea. She was half-an-hour by the clock yesterday, and then she had forgotten half the things. I timed myself to-day, and I was exactly ten minutes, and I've forgotten nothing."

"Very likely," answered Denys quietly.

"Mother is downstairs," pursued Gertrude, "and she says she shall not wait for the others, and she would like you two to have tea with her now."

"Thank you for doing it all," said Denys, hastily gathering her work together. A quiet tea alone with mother was too unusual a treat for there to be any lingering in going in, and Denys, as she raced Conway up the garden, tried to put away the thought of the promise she had just made. She remembered that she had not even asked Conway when he was to go to Germany!

CHAPTER IV

THE PICNIC DAY

As they sat down to tea Denys saw that a letter in her grandmother's handwriting lay beside her mother's plate. She noticed it because Saturday was not grandma's day for writing.

"How is grandma?" asked Conway, noticing it too.

"She is pretty well," his mother answered slowly. She took the letter up and turned it over, hesitatingly, regretfully; "that is why I wanted you both for a few minutes' quiet talk. Denys, dear, Aunt Lottie is to go for three months to Madeira, and she has asked me to let you go to take care of grandma while she is gone."

"To let me go!" echoed Denys. Visions of

the pretty drawing-room at "Rockview," of the magnificent views over the Downs, of the dainty china and soft carpets, and the general ease and comfort of grandma's home, floated before her mind, and lit up her face with a pleased smile; and then her eyes fell on her mother's delicate tinted cheeks, and she thought of the little troop coming home, and needing a hundred things done for them, and Lizzie with her forgetful head, and the baby!

Her face changed. "Oh, mother, you won't let me go; I couldn't be spared!" she cried earnestly. "You won't say I must go!"

"Mother, you can't spare her," put in Conway quickly; "there will be no one to help you, and they'll be writing to tell me you are quite done for. Send Gertrude!"

Mrs. Brougham smiled a watery little smile. "No," she said, and she succeeded in keeping her voice steady—"it is hard to lose both my elder chickens at once, but father and I have talked it all round, and it seems best. Gertrude is not old enough if grandma should be poorly, and it will be nice for Gertrude to have a little bit more responsibility at home.

Father has been to school this morning, and seen Miss Mason, and Gertrude is to stay in her present class next term, and not to take an examination at Christmas, so she will be quite at liberty from lessons in the evenings and on Saturday. I should like Denys to have a complete change before she settles down at home, and, God willing, she will be back again before the short winter days."

"Can't I have any choice?" asked Denys mournfully.

Her mother got up and came round to her, and put her arms round her, kissing her fondly. "I would like my mother to have the comfort of our Denys," she said softly. "Will you choose to go cheerfully, my darling?"

"I'll try, mother," Denys whispered tremulously; "but—but—oh, mother!"

Denys did try to be cheerful, and sometimes she really felt cheerful during the brief fortnight that elapsed before she went to her grandmother's. She dearly loved the seaside and grandma's house. "Rockview" stood on the side of steep Downs, with the wide sea stretched out below it, and on rough days the

roar of the surge, and on peaceful days the ripple and rush of the incoming tide sounded pleasantly in at the windows. Life at "Rockview" was a life of leisure, too, and there were pretty new frocks, ordered by grandma, being made at the dressmaker's.

If it had been a visit of a week or two Denys would have been the gayest of the gay over the prospect, but three months! What an age it seemed—thirteen weeks—a school term! It would be the middle of August when she went, and November must be half gone before she might think of returning. Nor was it like an ordinary visit, which she might terminate at any minute if she were needed at home. Grandma was very delicate, and once Aunt Lottie was gone, Denys would be in charge. The chain that would bind her was a pleasant, easy one, but she would be bound.

She watched Conway making his preparations, for he was to go to Germany about the same time. How light-hearted he was over it, and he was leaving home for a whole year!

But then, it was not the same thing for him. He was glad to leave school and begin the

wider preparation for his future, but Denys did not think of the daily quiet home life that seemed to lie before her, as any future. Their mother would miss Conway's coming home on Saturday and Sunday, but how she would miss Denys every day!

The children loved to play with Conway, but he was not a part of their daily life as Denys was. When Denys thought of Jerry's missing her, she had to go away by herself and fight down the rebellious tears. Jerry, tender-hearted, sensitive little Jerry, would want her all the time, and Gertrude would—would—*not* spoil him!

One very happy day came to her in that last fortnight. It was the day of the annual picnic of Miss Mason's school.

Each of the girls was allowed to invite one guest, and who that guest should be was *the* topic of conversation among the girls for nearly the whole term.

Everybody was certain that Gertrude would ask Reggie Alston, a Grammar School boy, and her constant ally and rival in hockey and tennis, though up to the very day the formal

invitations were written out at school, Gertrude declared she had not made up her mind, but everybody except Mrs. Brougham and Miss Mason were surprised when Deny's invitation went to Jerry.

As for Jerry himself, the idea of such bliss had never entered his small head. To go—with Denys — to the School Picnic — in four-horse brakes—and have dinner on the grass, out of hampers—and tea made from a real gipsy kettle! It was too too utterly, as Tony expressed it. Tony himself would dearly liked to have gone, and he looked at his small brother with envious eyes, till he learnt that he was to enter Miss Mason's Preparatory next term, and next year would have a right to the picnic himself and a right of invitation also.

"Perhaps *I* shall ask you next year, Jerry," he said, with a superior little air.

The Picnic Day was a glorious summer day, and Mrs. Brougham, and Tony and Baby, and many another mother too, walked down to the school to see the great party set off. Such smiling and hand-wavings and laughing

voices! The whole town seemed alive.

There was Gertrude looking her prettiest on the box-seat of the first wagonette, with Reggie Alston beside her, and in the last brake, among all the little ones, was Denys, with Jerry in a spotless white sailor suit, tucked in beside her.

Jerry was holding her hand very tight, but his face of radiant happiness was something to see.

It was all happiness to little Jerry that day. He had never had any sort of an outing before, never been into the real country fields or peeped into the woods, or smelled the bracken, or seen the rabbits scuttling across the open glades. Never before had he gathered ragged-robins and Stars-of-Bethlehem and honeysuckle for himself. Never before had he swung in a swing tied to the branch of a great tree, or played hide-and-seek and touch-wood with other little boys and girls.

Few of those other little boys and girls realized how much of their happiness that Picnic Day came through the gentle motherly girl with the brown hair, which shone like red

gold when the sun touched it, who did not wander away like the other big girls and boys, but stayed among the little ones, helping in their games, swinging them gently, and when the sun grew overpoweringly hot in the long afternoon, telling them fairy stories under the shade of a big beech tree.

But Miss Mason saw it all, and as she tended the gipsy fire and waited for the kettle to boil, she said to her friends—

"Denys Brougham is the most unselfish girl I know. I am sorry she is leaving us this term. Her influence is all good."

But every summer day comes to an end, and once more the brakes took up their burden, and the horses' heads were turned homewards.

Jerry, wearied out with happiness, was already nearly asleep, and Denys, with him in her arms, found herself, to her great surprise, marshalled by Miss Mason's own hand to the box-seat on the foremost brake. It was Miss Mason's hand, too, which placed a soft white shawl upon her shoulders, and covered up the sleeping child.

And so through the peaceful evening, with

the sunset glow in the west, and the darkening sky in the east, and Jerry's head nestling on her arm, Denys drove home and thought of the prayer that Conway had asked her to pray, and of the days that were past, and the days that were coming. What would that prayer for God's Holy Spirit bring her in the days that were coming?

Her face grew grave and thoughtful as she watched the stars twinkling out one by one, but Jerry's head on her arm moved, and the smile came back to her eyes as she bent her face to him.

"Isn't the sky pretty?" he said, in a very unsleepy voice.

"What sort of a day have you had, Jerry?" asked Miss Mason from the seat beside them.

"A happy day," answered Jerry, emphatically.

CHAPTER V

JERRY'S GOOD-NIGHT

On the evening before she left home, Denys came in from a few last errands to find her mother resting on the sofa.

"Mother! you are quite worn out!" she exclaimed. "We shall have knocked you up, Conway and I."

"Oh no!" answered her mother brightly. "I was only waiting for you to come in. Jerry does not seem quite the thing; complains of a pain, and his hands are hot, and perhaps I shall keep him in bed to-morrow, so I thought I would let you help me move his crib into my room to-night. There will be so little time in the morning."

Denys's heart gave a great throb of joy.

More than anything else in going away, she had dreaded Jerry's loneliness in the evenings when Tony lay fast asleep, and the big brown eyes were so wide open, staring into the half-darkness. She was sure that it was because Jerry did not like to be long alone that he called to her in the evenings, but in his mother's room there was always a light burning, and mother was often in and out to baby. When once his crib was established in the corner, Denys thought it might be a good many weeks before it was taken back to the night nursery.

A great load seemed to roll off her, and she scarcely heeded the reason of the change. Jerry had never been so strong as Tony.

"I'll do the crib all myself," she said quickly; "you just lie quite still, mother. I know exactly how it goes. I'll pop Jerry in your bed while I do it."

"How I shall miss you!" said her mother tenderly.

"Mother!" Denys suddenly knelt down beside her. An inspiration to solve the doubts and questionings of the last few weeks had

come to her. She felt as if she must know the truth, even if it was the bitter truth. Better anything than the miserable, unhappy constraint and resentment that had seemed to grow up in her heart towards her mother.

"Mother, are you sending me away because you think I spoil Jerry?"

"My dear child! No! Whatever made you think of such a thing?"

"I don't know exactly," faltered Denys, and the last load rolled off her heart; "it was little things Gertrude said, and then you said 'We must not spoil Jerry,' and I thought — perhaps—it was because of that."

Her mother shook her head. "No, dear," she repeated, "it was just that grandma asked for you, and we thought a little bit of wider life and fresh interests would be good for you. There is a great world outside our little home, you know, and when the door is just opening on this great world, girls like you think sometimes that they see everything! These three months with grandma will be part of the training for your future."

"My future!" echoed Denys, incredulously.

"I haven't got a future."

"Haven't you?" There was a smile on the tired sweet face among the cushions. "We do not know, any of us, what plans God has for our future. To us, just now, it seems as if your future were to go to grandma's, and then come back to be my home-daughter, and help me train the little ones for their future. That is why I spoke about spoiling Jerry. Not to blame you, but to help you to be wise as well as loving."

"Yes?" said Denys, humbly.

"How little Moses knew about his future when he kept those sheep for forty years in the lonely, quiet, hum-drum wilderness! Yet afterwards he was the ruler and law-giver of a nation, and God spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend! That was a future!"

"Forty years in the wilderness," sighed Denys. "I shall feel quite old when I get to forty!"

"Not if your heart keeps young," smiled the mother, who had not yet come to her fortieth birthday; "and there is nothing that

keeps the heart so young as loving and caring for little children. But if we want to be ready for God's future, we need to do His will every day, as it comes to us in the circumstances and duty of every day."

"But I am not a Christian, mother."

A shadow fell over her mother's face.

"That is the next step for you to take, then, darling. Don't stay outside the Kingdom, my Denys."

Denys bent and kissed her yearningly. She had never so nearly yielded herself to Christ, but she did not yield. She only said softly—

"I shan't have you to kiss to-morrow night."

Then she went upstairs to carry Jerry across to her mother's room, and to move his crib. How empty the night nursery looked without his little bed beside her own! But it was only for one night that she would miss it there! To-morrow she would be far away, and Jerry would be safe in her mother's room. The comfort of that thought would help her go to sleep to-morrow night.

Jerry, too, was very content, and very wide awake. When he was quite settled, and be-

fore the movable side of the crib had been replaced, Denys knelt down by him and took him in her arms, and his curly head nestled close to hers.

"Dear Denys," he whispered, "stay a little while with me and tell me about Jesus."

Obediently she began his favourite hymn. This was not like talking about Jesus Christ to Conway! Jerry loved to hear about Jesus, and Denys loved to tell of what Jerry loved to hear.

"Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a Mother laid her Baby,
In a manger for His bed.
Mary was that Mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child."

"That's the one," murmured Jerry.

Verse after verse came in Denys' soft, soothing tones. She thought Jerry had fallen asleep, and her voice lingered over the end of the fourth verse. The sweet words seemed to comfort her.

"And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness."

But Jerry was not asleep. His big brown eyes opened wide.

"I know the next," he said, eagerly.

He folded his little hands together reverently.

"And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love,
For that Child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in Heaven above;
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone."

The last words came slowly, he was nearly asleep now. "You finish it," he murmured drowsily.

And Denys finished it, the triumphant words floating out into the still room. Afterwards—how soon afterwards!—the remembrance of her own voice repeating them came back to her.

"Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in Heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
When like stars His children crown'd,
All in white shall wait around."

Once more she kissed the little face so near her own.

"Good-night, my precious one!" she said, softly.

And once more the warm arms crept up round her neck, and held her a moment.

"Good-night, Denys darling! You'll come up if I call you, won't you?

"Yes, dear," she promised.

CHAPTER VI

AN EASY LIFE

Denys had been twenty-four hours at "Rockview," and she stood at the drawing-room window looking out over the darkening sea with such home-sickness tugging at her heart that she could scarcely keep the tears back or steady her voice to answer her grandmother. Yet she knew she must be brave and not give way. Grandma had a weak heart, and any emotion was bad for her, and she had already gone through a very hard day. Aunt Lottie had left for Madeira early that morning, and though grandma had said nothing about it, Denys knew she must feel very strange with only a granddaughter to wait

upon her, instead of the daughter who knew exactly what she wanted.

In a few days they would settle down, and Denys would know the little ways of the house, and where everything was kept, and what things grandma liked done for her. Her sight was beginning to fail, and she was only allowed to go up and down stairs twice in each day, but she was very independent, and Denys had to learn in what things she was dependent.

Just now Denys was watching for the postman. There was just a faint hope that she might get a letter from home to-night. And she had been at home only yesterday! How long ago it seemed! She wondered what they were all doing just now while she was looking out on the sea. Had Gertrude put Tony to bed? Was the nursery tidy, or were Tony's garments scattered about as Gertrude had said she would leave them?

Was Jerry in his cot in his mother's room? Had he been in bed all day? Was he quite well again?

For the first time since she left home a sudden fear about Jerry came to her. Suppose

he were to be really ill!

Grandma's voice arrested her thoughts. "Would you light the big lamp, dear?"

Denys turned round hastily. There was no postman in sight, and perhaps the last post was already in, and she was forgetting grandma. Mother would be sorry if she forgot to take care of grandma.

"Shall I read to you, grandma?"

"Thank you, my dear. I have almost finished my letter to Aunt Lottie. If I post it to-night I shall catch her at Southampton."

Denys was lighting the lamp with deft fingers.

"How delighted she will be!" she observed. "I wonder if she is writing a letter to you now, ready to post at Southampton?"

Her grandmother looked pleased.

"I didn't think of that," she said, "but Lottie was always one to think of pleasant surprises. There is the paper, dear. You can look it through and find something interesting while I finish this."

"I think somebody besides Aunt Lottie thinks of pleasant surprises," laughed Denys;

"we always like your letters at home."

She settled herself in the rocking-chair under the lamp and turned the paper over. What did grandma call interesting?

The sound of a thundering double knock made her start, but she did not jump up and run for the letters as she would have done at home till grandma said, placidly—

"That was the postman, my dear. You can get the letters for me."

Denys brought them, and her grandmother read the addresses leisurely, and even examined the postmarks of her own before she looked at the next.

"One for cook and one for Mary, and the last for you, my dear. I suppose I shall get few letters from your mother now you are here! Ring the bell, please."

Mary answered it, and when she had carried off the kitchen letters, Denys was free to examine her own. How strange the address seemed! "Miss Brougham, % Mrs. Marston, 'Rockview,' Saltmarsh." She was glad that grandma's pen still scribbling to Aunt Lottie gave her time to enjoy the dear letter in peace.

But as she read it her face grew graver and graver. She finished it and turned the page and began it again. She did not know that the scratching pen had stopped, and that Mrs. Marston was watching her granddaughter's face.

"Do they miss you very much, that you look so grave, Denys?"

The sudden colour rushed to Denys's cheeks.

"Jerry is ill," she said, sadly. Then she remembered grandma's weak heart and that anxiety was bad for her, and she looked up and tried to make the best of it.

"Mother doesn't say what it is," she said, "only that he was very quiet and not like himself all yesterday. She says I am not to be anxious. The doctor was coming again to-day, and would know better then what it is. She sends her love to you, and says she knows how you will be missing Aunt Lottie to-night."

"As your mother misses you," said grandma, kindly. "You must not think too seriously of Jerry's illness, my dear. Little children have so many ups and downs. I trust you will hear to-morrow that he is quite well again."

Denys tried to think it possible, but she felt there was an unspoken anxiety between the lines of her mother's letter. She folded it up, and seeing that her grandmother had taken her knitting and was ready to listen to the paper, she began on the leading article.

On and on she read in her soft pleasant voice, but she took in very little of the meaning of the words before her eyes. Her mind was far away, picturing a quiet shady sick-room, and a little face crowned with curly hair lying on a white pillow.

Oh to be there and to know how Jerry was!

Then it flashed into her remembrance that to-night Conway was starting for Germany by the midnight train. Did Conway feel as lonely and home-sick as she did? He would know the latest news of Jerry, at any rate.

She was very glad when her grandmother proposed going to bed early and having a long night. Last night Denys had occupied the spare room, but to-night she was to take Aunt Lottie's place in the pretty little room opening out of grandma's.

She loved this little room. She could hear

the breaking of the waves on the rocks below, and watch the bright pathway of the moon over the water, and in the morning the sun crept in to wake her with its glad light.

She helped her grandmother get ready for the night, and then went to her own room and shut the door. She was glad that grandma liked to have the door shut.

She put her light out, and pulling up the blind, knelt down in the moonlight and prayed that God would bless all the dear ones at home and make Jerry quite well. At the end she added Conway's prayer. He was going away to-night, so she supposed she must begin to keep her promise. She meant to lie awake a little while and watch the moon, but her head had scarcely touched the pillow before she was asleep, and when she next woke it was morning.

She was awakened by Mary's entrance with hot water. She hid her face in her pillow as she remembered how she had longed only three weeks ago for these little luxuries, for leisure and the easy things of life, and had grudged, if it was only grudged a very little, the busy

days filled so full with little homely duties. And now, the easy things had come, and she would have given all she possessed not to have longed so ardently for them, and to be back in the old busy life.

The breakfast-bell rang as she went down the stairs, and Cook came forward to meet her.

"Mistress is a little tired this morning, Miss, and she would like you to take up her breakfast to her in bed. I've put a tray ready."

"Oh, thank you! She isn't really ill, is she? Would you mind showing me how she likes it?"

Cook followed her into the dining-room.

"Here's the letters," she said. "She likes 'em at the side, so."

Denys looked at the neat little pile longingly. Might she venture to disarrange it and see if there was one for herself, or would Cook think she was examining grandma's correspondence?

Cook interpreted her glance, however. "There's not one for you, Miss," she said, kindly. "How young folks do look out for letters, to be sure! They expects them by every

post."

Denys carried up the tray, and made her grandmother comfortable. When all was done she lingered a moment. Grandma was turning over her letters. It was possible that Mrs. Brougham might have witten to grandma this time.

"Nothing at all interesting this morning," announced grandma, laying aside the last envelope; "run down and have your breakfast, child, and come up to me at nine. Eat a good breakfast!"

Denys tried to obey. The morning paper lay on the table, and while she ate she amused herself by looking up something interesting to read aloud in the evening.

At nine she went up to grandma and helped her to dress, and by and by she took her for a walk in the garden.

They had not long come back to the dining-room, and Denys had brought down her needle-work, when a ring at the front door was followed by Cook's appearance in the dining-room. "Mr. Conway Brougham!" she announced, formally.

Denys dropped her work and sprang forward to greet him. Conway had not gone last night, then; he had come to say good-bye!

But one look into Conway's face told her for what he had come.

"Oh, Conway! Conway!" she cried out.

CHAPTER VII

WHY CONWAY CAME

Conway came forward slowly and took his grandmother's outstretched hand.

"Well, Conway, this is a surprise!" she said, heartily. "I thought you were leaving for Germany last night."

"I didn't go," hesitated Conway, utterly taken aback by Denys's comprehension of his coming and his grandmother's lack of understanding. "I—I—came—little Jerry——" His voice faltered.

"Ah!" said his grandmother, "he has been poorly! Denys was feeling quite anxious about him last night. Where is Denys?" she asked, looking round.

But Denys had fled away up to her little room, and flung herself across her bed in a passion of weeping.

"Oh, Jerry, my precious little Jerry!" she sobbed.

Conway drew nearer to his grandmother.

"Won't you sit down, grandma?" he said, gently. "Denys has gone upstairs. She—she understood why I came."

Mrs. Marston looked in his face searchingly. She did not know its expression as Denys knew it.

"Is little Jerry worse?" she asked.

Conway shook his head. For a moment he could not answer. Then he steadied his voice.

"He died yesterday," he said, "in the early afternoon; God called him Home."

There was silence in the room, the clock ticked loudly on the mantelpiece, the wash of the waves came softly in at the window. Conway was fighting back his grief. It was his first sorrow, the first touch on his life of Death's icy hand.

And as he stood there, like sweet music there came to his mind the words which he

sang every Sunday morning.

"When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers." And with them came other words, spoken by Him who had so overcome death.

"Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Mrs. Marston, too, was silent; she sat looking out of the window with eyes that saw nothing of the outside world.

"It seems to bring Heaven very near," she said, dreamily. Then she roused herself.

"Poor little Denys! Conway, you had better go and find her. You will comfort her best."

Conway found Denys lying across her bed as she had first thrown herself. She took no notice of his entrance, and he sat down beside her and waited. What could he say? And perhaps his very silence was the best comfort he could have given her just then.

In the silence and the waiting his thoughts flew back to the bright little life that had so unexpectedly left their home for ever. On the cliff outside a little child's voice suddenly

sounded out, bringing back some memory of a tone of Jerry's voice, as he had called across the garden to Conway not a week ago, and the knowledge that he would never again hear Jerry calling to him swept over him, and he covered his face with his hands, and buried it in the pillow, trying to stifle the grief which would have its way at last.

The sound of his smothered sobs roused Denys as nothing else would have done. She got off the bed and went to him, putting her arm round his shoulder, and they wept together for a few minutes.

A sound of a door shutting downstairs recalled her grandmother to her mind.

She dried her eyes and stood up.

"Grandma!" she said, "we ought not to leave her alone!"

She caught sight of herself in the glass, her face swollen with crying, and her hair dishevelled. She must not go to grandma like that. She poured some water into the basin and bathed her eyes and made Conway do the same, and then they went downstairs together.

Grandma was waiting for them, and the

table had been set with a dainty white cloth, a tea-tray, and a plate of very thin bread and butter.

"You have had a long journey, Conway," she said, gently, "and a cup of tea will do you good, I am sure. Denys and I shall like a cup too; it seems a very long time since we had breakfast."

If Conway had been asked he would have said he could eat nothing, but when grandma poured out the tea with her own hand, and pushed that very delicate bread and butter towards him, he could not refuse, and Denys accepted a cup too, more because of Conway and grandma, than because she felt she could drink it, but it did them all good, and by and by Denys could ask in a low tone—

"Did mother send me any message?"

"She sent me!" said Conway, simply. "She knew how much you would both want to know all."

Denys's tears dropped fast.

"I would like to hear," she said, and grandma's sympathetic face gave the same answer,

so Conway began—

"You know that Jerry was not very well when Denys left," he said, addressing himself rather to grandma than to his sister, for the sight of Denys's white, sorrow-stricken face almost unnerved him, "and mother sent for Dr. Richards. He came in the afternoon, and he sat down by Jerry and asked him a lot of questions, but he said very little to mother, only to order some medicine, and to give her directions; but somehow she felt anxious.

"The next morning, that is, yesterday, Dr. Richards came again, early, bringing Dr. Wilson with him, and when they came downstairs they said it was appendicitis, and there must be an operation at once."

Denys caught her breath, but she did not speak, and Conway went on with his story.

"The doctors settled it all for the afternoon, and we telegraphed for father, and before he could come, Miss Mason's sister—the one who is a trained hospital nurse—came in. She had just met Dr. Richards and heard about Jerry, and she had come to offer to nurse Jerry for two days; she had only two days of her holi-

day left, but we could get another nurse by that time. She said she had seen Jerry at the picnic, and he was such a dear little chap. She wanted to help nurse him."

"She played with him a long time," murmured Denys.

"Mother was so glad, so comforted," continued Conway, "and Jerry smiled when he saw her, but he took very little notice of anything.

"By and by, mother came down to me. She looked very pale, but she was quite calm. 'Conway!' she said, 'I think Nurse is very anxious about the little darling. I would like for you and me to ask God that if it is not His will to give us back Jerry's little life, He will spare him from going through the operation. We are told to make our requests known unto God, and to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, and we can pray, too, to say, Not my will, but Thine, be done.'

"So we knelt down in the dining-room, mother and I, and mother prayed just a few words, and then she went up to Jerry again, and father came home and went upstairs, and

then he went out again to see Dr. Richards.

"Gertrude took baby and Tony to the Park to keep the house quiet, and I waited to do anything I could, and to let the doctors in."

Conway paused. The remembrance of that time of waiting downstairs in the quiet house, when he could do nothing but wait and listen, came over him afresh, and for a moment he could not go on.

When he could, his voice was hushed and low. "They came just before three o'clock, so quietly that I did not know that the carriage had come till I saw them walking up the path. I went to let them in, and as they stepped across the threshold, father came down the stairs to meet them with such a look on his face!

" 'He is at rest', he said; 'he died as the carriage came to the door.'

"Dr. Richards laid down his bag and took father's hand in his. 'My poor friend!' he said, 'I know what it is. I lost my own little chap last year.'

"Then they all went upstairs very softly,

and by and by, when they had gone away, I went up too. Jerry looked so sweet and peaceful, and he was smiling as if he saw angels."

CHAPTER VIII

LEFT BEHIND

"Can't I just see him again?" said Denys, pitifully.

Conway shook his head.

"Couldn't I go home for the funeral?"

"What do you think yourself, Denys?"

There was a pause. The sister and brother were alone. In less than an hour Conway must go down to the station, and begin the long journey which lay between Saltmarsh and home; and a wild, almost overwhelming desire to go with him seized upon Denys as the time of his departure drew near.

"I must go. I must go. I must go."

The words seemed burned into her brain, to be hammering themselves into her ears. It was

impossible to think of staying behind when Conway was going—to Jerry. Jerry, whom she had loved with all the strength of her young, strong life. If she might not see his face once more, she might touch his soft hair, she might kneel beside his little coffin, and weep out her sorrow there. She might go with him till he was laid in the earth to wait for the Resurrection Day. She could bear to have him hidden from her eyes if he were hidden from the eyes of others too; but she could not bear to think that others would be near to him, and she far away!

And she knew that she must stay where she was! She was glad, glad that Conway did not put into words the considerations that were in his mind, the absolute obligation there was on her to stay. She knew it all.

"Oh, it's so hard, it's so hard!" she cried out passionately.

Conway's face worked. "If I could have stayed for you, I would," he said, very low.

The clock ticked on solemnly, and the minutes passed one by one. Conway, always a silent boy, could find no words now. How

could he comfort Denys with the comfort that had come to him as he bent to kiss little Jerry's dead face? the comfort that had come to King David.

"I shall go to him."

Conway could look across a few years of life and see the day when he too should sleep in Jesus, and wake to the vision of his Saviour, and the meeting with Jerry, but with Denys it was different.

Could she say with the same certainty, "I shall go to him," when she was turning away from the Good Shepherd who had taken Jerry in His arms?

Conway could pray for her. His heart lightened as he thought of it. He could ask the Good Shepherd to find Denys as she wandered on the dark mountain of sorrow.

> "Do you ask me the place of the valley,
> Ye hearts that are harrowed by care?
> It lieth afar between mountains,
> And God and His angels are there.
> One is the dark mountain of sorrow,
> And one the bright mountain of prayer."

Conway started as his eyes fell on the words,

as they hung on the almanac beside his grandmother's fire-place. How appropriate they were! He glanced at Denys. Her eyes were fixed on the almanac too, but Conway could not tell if she even saw the words upon it, nor guess at the thoughts behind her sorrowful face.

His glance passed on to the clock, and he rose. "I must go," he said, unconsciously voicing the cry in her heart. "Will you come to the station with me?"

"Oh yes, yes!"

She went to get ready, and as she took out her hat a deep wave of colour spread over her face and neck. How incongruous its soft blue ribbons looked; and she had nothing black! Hastily she found a dark-grey Tam-o'-shanter and pinned it on. What was she to do about getting mourning? She *could* not ask her grandmother, and she knew her mother had found it hard to get both her and Conway ready to go away, and since then what calls had come upon the family purse!

She knew she must ask Conway about it, but it was hard to do.

They were half-way to the station before she could bring it out.

"Conway, I haven't a black dress! Did mother say anything?"

"Why, yes! I'm sorry I forgot." He dived into his pocket and brought out a sovereign. "She sent this, and she said you would understand that she would have sent more if she could——"

"Oh yes, of course," murmured Denys. "I couldn't bear to ask you, only—I thought—as you were here——"

"I ought to have told you at once," said Conway. "Well, mother said you must get some stuff, not very heavy or expensive, one shilling, nine pence or one shilling, eleven pence a yard, I think she said—and some lining—and would you try and make a simple dress yourself? She sent the pattern she had for your blue one——"

He dived into another pocket and brought out a paper pattern. How well Denys remembered it! There was the little jagged edge that Tony had torn, and she had let Jerry paint the picture outside it to keep him happy

while she worked.

She took it in her hand tenderly. How little she had thought then that the next time she would use it it would be to make mourning for Jerry!

But Conway had not finished his message.

"Then you must get a little cheap hat, and some ribbon, and perhaps a jet buckle, and you have your grey jacket."

Denys nodded. "I can paint my blue hat black," she said; "that would give me enough money for gloves."

"Mother said she knew you would try to manage, and you need not feel in a hurry to finish the dress *too* quickly."

"No," said Denys, wearily.

They had reached the station, and very soon the train came panting in. As Conway leaned out of the carriage window, Denys suddenly lifted her face to him.

"Conway! I prayed your prayer last night."

When the train was gone she wondered what had made her say it, but the brightness of Conway's answering smile had left a little ray of gladness in her sorrowful heart.

She walked home very slowly. There was nothing to hurry for; grandma had gone to lie down till tea-time, and the sunny hill-sides seemed less lonely than the quiet house.

She sat down to rest on a stile, and looked out over the tossing, purple-barred sea with eyes that scarcely noted the lovely, ever-changing shadows that fell from the scudding clouds above. Dan, Aunt Lottie's terrier, crept up into her arms, and she held him close. He was something alive, something to love.

She was roused from her dull misery by a short bark from the dog.

Turning her head, she saw that a lady was waiting to cross the stile.

She sprang down and stood aside with a hurried apology, and the newcomer, a buxom, middle-aged lady, climbed over, leisurely enough, and stood beside her.

A moment she seemed to hesitate, then her kindly eyes met Denys's.

"My dear," she said, "the Lord Jesus Christ can comfort you."

She smiled ere she went on her way, and Denys stood looking after her, dumfounded.

Fancy a stranger speaking to her—like that! Nevertheless the words were strangely soothing.

CHAPTER IX

LOST IN THE MIST

How Denys got through the next two weeks she could hardly have told. The making of her black dress occupied both mind and fingers for some days, but when that was done—very successfully done, Denys considered — the days seemed very empty, and very hard to fill.

There is an old Chinese proverb which says, "One day is like another, but one day is not the same as another."

Denys was finding the truth of it. She wondered where the "wider life, the preparation for her future," that her mother had spoken of, could be. To grandma, and to her middle-aged servants, the daily peaceful routine,

which, after Conway's hurried visit, nothing came to break, was all that could be desired. But to Denys, fresh from the constant round of little duties, the incessant calls upon her good-nature, upon her time, and upon her energies, fresh from the breezy life of school and the comings and goings of a large family, it seemed stagnation. And underneath it all, the more felt because of the uneventful days, there throbbed in her heart the pain of the separation from the little clinging child who had formed the centre of the love of her girlhood.

Not a separation of three months only, and then the joy of re-union; but a lifetime lay between her and Jerry, and at the end——. That had been the bitterness of Denys's first grief when she read Conway's tidings in his face, it was the bitterness of her grief now; she had no certainty of re-union with Jerry.

Jerry was with Jesus, and Denys had never wanted Jesus. She had turned away from Him all her life.

One afternoon, as she left Rockview behind her, and climbed up over the Downs, the

thought of this pressed upon her heavily.

She remembered the night before she left home, when she had so nearly yielded herself to Christ. Oh, if she had only done it then, how differently she would feel now!

She remembered Jerry's satisfied little voice as he repeated the words of his hymn:

"And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone."

Would Jerry be waiting for her? What if he were disappointed and she never came?

"You'll come if I call you?"

"Yes, dear," she had promised.

Was he calling her now?

She sat down on a grassy knoll and hid her face in her hands. Oh, if only she had given herself to Jesus before!

She had rejected Him when she was happy and successful, and she bent her head lower and lower in shame as she thought of it.

How could she come to Him now, when she was lonely and sorrowful?

"Through His own redeeming love."

Once more Jerry's voice came back to her—with the message of peace.

She might come to Jesus now—as she was—

"Through His own redeeming love."

Somehow, as she thought of that, the thought of Jerry faded from the central place, and Another took it, Jesus, her Saviour. She spoke to him in her heart, "Lord Jesus, take me now, and forgive me all my sin."

She rose at last, and her face was quiet and peaceful and her eyes shone. Her burden had fallen off at the foot of the Cross.

She walked on a little way, turned round the bend of the hill, and stood a moment looking over the panorama of valley and hillside that lay stretched out before her. A white mist was creeping over the farthest hill, and already the sunshine was fading. She watched the mist curiously. It spread over everything like a rolling curtain. A moment and the hillsides were there, another moment and they were gone! Denys had never seen anything like it before. The very birds had ceased singing!

It suddenly occurred to her that she had better turn homewards, but she was too late.

Even as she turned, the mist swept down on her and wrapped her round. She strained her eyes into its white depths. She could see nothing, nothing else around her.

Where was she? Which way was home?

Surely this way. She hurried forward as fast as she dared stretching her hands before her as if on a dark night. She was alone and lost.

She could only see the path that lay about her feet, and she suddenly remembered that just around the corner where she had come so lately the pathway ran close to the steep edge of the Downs. Only take a few steps from the right road and she might be lying at the bottom of the narrow chasm into which she had peeped wonderingly a few minutes before in the sunshine. But where was the corner? Surely she must have reached it and turned it long ere this! She stopped suddenly, and held her breath to listen. She strained her eyes into the thick mist. What was that sound? Her heart beat in her ears as she listened.

CHAPTER X

HALF OF A MATTER

Oh, that white fog! If it would only lift and let her see from whence that weird sound came! Denys stood listening as if turned to stone. She had always counted herself a brave girl, but as she stared vainly into the depths of that dense enveloping mist, that now even hid the stones that lay at her feet, she felt all her courage oozing away.

Then again came that wild, long-drawn-out cry, and with a gasp she knew what it was. It was the fog-siren of a steamer in the bay!

And with that realization came another—the realization that all life had changed for her that afternoon. She had given herself to

Jesus Christ, and now she belonged to Him, and all the promises she had heard other Christians rest themselves upon were her possession, and especially that one, "Lo, I am with you always," which she had that very morning glanced at quite casually as it hung above her grandmother's dressing-table.

The awful loneliness of the mist-wreathed hillside weighed upon her less as she thought that the Lord Jesus was there too. She took a few careful steps forward and then another sound came up to her, dulled indeed, as if from a distance, but yet an unmistakable boy's whistle. The tune was one which had been a signal-call between her and Conway for months—

"Charlie is my darling, my own Cavalier."

Without a moment's hesitation, in her bewilderment and the sudden certainty that Conway must be close at hand, Denys's lips formed into a whistle, and the familiar counter-call went out, clear and sweet as a bird's whistle—

"Charlie is my darling, my own Cavalier."

She knew a moment after that, of course, it could not be Conway's whistle, but somebody was there, and she might find out the way home.

"Please help me; I'm lost in the fog," she called out in a rather trembling voice.

"I'll help you, if I can find you," came back in reassuring tones. "Which side of you is my voice?"

"To my left," answered Denys, gazing eagerly towards the sound.

Then a figure loomed through the fog and a very surprised voice said—

"Hullo! why, you are a girl!"

Denys actually laughed. The relief of seeing somebody was so great, and this was a young fellow, a little older than herself, whose face was so kindly and so cheerful and so dependable, that it seemed as if the sun had shone through the fog and suddenly beamed upon her.

"Which way do you want to go?" he asked. "It is a fog, isn't it? But it's lifting—see!"

As he spoke it was even so. The air grew lighter, a little breeze touched the hillside, the

mist began to wreath away in white swirling drifts, and a gleam of sunshine shot across the path.

"There's the sea!" cried Denys. "Now I know where I am!"

Her companion smiled. "It might come down again," he said; "nasty things these fogs are sometimes. I've lived here all my life, so I know. I'll come with you to the village if you'll let me."

"Thank you," said Denys gratefully.

They walked forward side by side, till Denys, glancing up, found him regarding her with a very amused expression.

"Who taught you to whistle?" he asked. "I thought you were a boy!"

"It was Conway, my brother," said Denys. Somehow, she did not feel at all shy with this stranger. It was the first young life she had met since Conway went away, and she seemed to drop back into the freedom of speech of the old home-life, where Conway's boy friends had been her friends, as naturally as she had just whistled. She remembered that she had not whistled since she came to Saltmarsh.

"You didn't know my name was Charlie?" said her companion.

Denys laughed outright at the funniness of it. "Conway and I used that for our private call," she explained; "we heard it played at a concert once."

Her eyes sparkled with merriment at the remembrance. and her companion broke into her sentence.

"Played on a bassoon!" he cried; " 'Charlie in my darling' with variations! Were *you* at that concert at Braintree? Oh, I never laughed so much in my life as I did at that! 'Charlie is my darling' played on the bassoon *with* variations!"

"That was it," said Denys. "Oh, it was funny, wasn't it? Gertrude was so angry because Conway and I laughed. Now I can tell her that you laughed as well."

"I wonder if I saw you there," said Charlie reflectively. "There were a lot of"—he stopped short, he was about to say, "pretty girls," but the words died on his lips; somehow the girl beside him did not look like a girl who would care for such things to be said to her—"lots

of students and school girls," he substituted.

The two walked along very happily, chatting about all sorts of things, and Denys was quite surprised when she stopped instinctively at her grandmother's familiar white gate.

"Thank you very much for taking care of me," she said. "This is grandma's house."

Charlie lifted his cap. "Next time you are lost you might try whistling to me again," he said audaciously. "I say, don't you cycle? There are ever so many jolly rides round here!"

"I brought my cycle," Denys answered a little wearily, "but somehow I haven't ridden it yet."

"Then you should," he said heartily. "Look here, I shall come for you to-morrow and take you a run. I'll be sitting on the fence there, waiting, at three o'clock."

He lifted his cap once more and swung away, and he was gone before Denys realized that she had tacitly accepted his appointment. She would have run after him and told him she did not know what her grandmother would wish, but as she turned he was already out of sight.

Indoors she found a letter from Conway, and she sat down with great delight to decipher its closely-written pages, that were so full of new ideas and the adventures of the first weeks in Germany. She determined to begin a letter to Conway this very evening. What would he say when she told him that she loved Jesus now?

And then it flashed across her that this was what Conway had hoped when he asked her to pray for the Holy Spirit. Her prayer had been answered, and the Holy Spirit had done His work. He had taken of the things of Christ and shown them unto her. He had not spoken of Himself, but He had spoken to her wayward heart of Jesus!

Denys knew her Bible well. She had been made familiar with its truths from babyhood, but only now had they entered into her heart. As she thought of these things, words about the Holy Spirit, which hitherto had only been "texts," sprang up in her mind, and an awed feeling came over her as she thought of the Holy One who had been teaching her so silently, so unperceived.

Was she to go on praying for the Holy Spirit now? she must ask Conway.

She had plenty of time to begin and to finish her letter to Conway that evening, for her grandmother was very unwell. Denys could not even tell her of her afternoon adventure; she could only creep in and out of the darkened room from time to time to give the prescribed food and medicine. But she told Conway all about the fog and about Charlie, whom she described as a very nice, jolly sort of boy. She even drew a sketch of him sitting on a fence, bicycle in hand, waiting for her, but for all that she felt a trifle uncomfortable about it. She began to wonder how she could introduce that part of the story to her grandmother, and what Mrs. Marston would say to it.

At her lonely breakfast the next morning it occurred to her that it might not be necessary to mention the proposed cycle ride at all. It was the usual thing for her to go out while her grandmother rested, and she could start a few minutes before three and intercept Charlie on his way up to sit on the fence.

She would tell Mrs. Marston all about the fog adventure, and on her return from the cycle ride would say that she had met Charlie again. She did wish Charlie had divulged his surname. It seemed so odd and familiar to say "Charlie" to Mrs. Marston, and "Mr. Charles" was infinitely worse!

For a little while this seemed a delightful way out of a tiresome explanation, and she went out to the shed to look over her machine and see that it was all in order. Then gradually there stole over her a feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction with herself. They had always told out all their plans and doings at home; they had been expected to do so, and had never wished otherwise, or thought it irksome, but to be going out to ride with Charlie and to avoid telling her grandmother till it was over!—it seemed almost like some of Pauline Stacey's doings, which Denys had felt were underhand and not straightforward.

But would Mrs. Marston understand just how the arrangement came about? Would she lift her eyebrows and think it odd? Might she even forbid it altogether and leave

Charlie sitting on the fence for an indefinite time, to draw his own conclusions?

Such a climax seemed unbearable, and Denys argued to herself that circumstances were altered now; she was nearly grown up, and need not be accountable in every little matter. Besides, her grandmother was not her mother. Mother always understood when any one got into an awkward corner, but of her grandmother Denys was not quite sure.

By the time the cycle was in spick-and-span order and the tires pumped up, Denys had quite determined that she need say nothing, except about the fog.

She settled her grandmother in her arm-chair in the sunny dining-room, found her knitting, and sat down opposite to her with her own work and Conway's letter.

Mrs. Marston was not quite ready, however, to be read or talked to. Her knitting required a great deal of counting and arranging, and while she waited in silence Denys began to plan out how she should best tell her story. She felt the importance that it held in her mind was ridiculous, and she wondered if the

half matters which Pauline Stacey confided to Mrs. Stacey took her as long to concoct.

She was startled by her grandmother's voice.

"We seem to have seen little of one another since this time yesterday, Denys."

Here was her opening. She bent her head lower over her work. "I had quite an adventure in the afternoon, grandma. I got lost in the fog."

Mrs. Marston listened with great interest. Denys was a good story-teller, and her voice was soft and pleasant to listen to. In her tale she had brought herself and Charlie as far as the gate of Rockview, when Mrs. Marston interrupted her.

"One moment, my dear — I must count again."

Denys breathed more freely. How easy it would be to begin a fresh subject when her grandmother was ready! And then all suddenly, as she waited, Denys remembered that moment on the hillside yesterday when she had given herself to Jesus! What would the Lord Jesus think of her keeping back the last

bit of her story?

And as she thought of Him, Denys knew that she had been on the verge of a deception. She knew that she had been tempted of the devil.

"When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come!"

She need not ask Conway if she should still pray for the Holy Spirit to be given her. Oh, how she needed Him, the Spirit of Truth!

Such thoughts, such revelations of ourselves, pass through our minds in a very few moments of time. When Mrs. Marston had finished her counting, Denys looked up at her, a little flush on either cheek.

"Grandma," she said, hurriedly and appealingly. "I don't know what you will think—I hope you won't be vexed—but just as he was going away, this boy—Charlie—asked me if I cycled, and said he would fetch me this afternoon at three o'clock. I seemed to have no time to think what to say before he was gone, and though I would have run after him, he was quite out of sight."

Mrs. Marston did not answer. She laid down her knitting, very deliberately, and, stooping

over the little work-basket at her side, appeared to be searching for something.

Denys watched her averted face anxiously. What did her silence portend? She had time to wonder if grandma remembered as well as she did herself, a certain day in Denys's early childhood, when grandmotherly displeasure had sent her to bed at three o'clock in the afternoon. Of the cause of offence Denys had not the slightest recollection, but she would never forget the glare of sunshine that flooded her bedroom all that weary June afternoon and evening. Could such a thing happen again?

Out of the work-basket Mrs. Marston produced her spectacles and a letter, and after adjusting the spectacles, still very deliberately, she began to read aloud:—

"My dear Mrs. Marston,

"I had the pleasure of meeting your granddaughter today, and suggested taking her for a short cycle ride to-morrow afternoon, to see some of our pretty bits of country. If you could spare her to come back to us for a

cup of tea, mother and Audrey want to make acquaintance too.

"Yours always,

"CHARLIE HENCHMAN."

Denys almost gasped. Then her grandmother had known all the time! Suppose she had kept to her resolution of saying nothing about the cycle ride! She felt as a man might feel who, walking through a tangle of gorse and bushes, comes suddenly to the brink of a chalk-pit, over whose edge one more step must have taken him.

Mrs. Marston folded up the letter slowly, and Denys began to see that the deliberateness of her actions this morning were only the weakness of an invalid.

Such a rush of feelings as swept over her. Thankfulness to God for His preventing mercy, gratitude to Charlie for sending a proper invitation, tenderness towards the helpless grandmother whom she had so nearly deceived!

There was a moment's pause. Little as Denys guessed it, her grandmother was quite

aware of the effort it had been to Denys to tell of Charlie's unconventional invitation.

"The Henchmans are old friends of mine," she said. "I should like you to go very much. You had better wear your white frock; it is more suitable than your black one. Now read me Conway's letter."

That was a delightful afternoon. There was no need for Charlie to sit on the fence, for punctually at three o'clock Denys was at the gate in her white dress and with a brighter face than she had worn since she came to Saltmarsh.

How differently she would have felt if at five minutes to three she had crept out of the gate and met Charlie at the bottom of the road!

The ride over, she had tea in the Henchmans' pretty little drawing-room, and was introduced to Mrs. Henchman and Audrey, Charlie's only sister, a lively little individual of twelve.

"You must go out with Charlie and Audrey often," Mrs. Henchman said; "it is quite dreadful to think of you alone on those wild

Downs—and in the fog, too! and Charlie has plenty of time on his hands just now, poor fellow."

Charlie's face darkened. They seemed to take it for granted that Denys understood, and Audrey broke in, half petulantly—

"He doesn't have time to mend my cycle. How can I take Denys out?"

"Children like you ought to say 'Miss Brougham,' " was Charlie's curt reply.

Denys was glad of a chance to change the subject. "Oh, no, please," she said, "I have always been Denys — never Miss Brougham yet. I'm not *quite* grown up."

"Of course not—while you go about whistling," laughed Charlie.

"You do tease," said Denys. "Mrs. Henchman, that is six o'clock striking, and I must go back to grandma. It is so very kind of you to have asked me to come."

Audrey, still lamenting over her cycle-less condition, accompanied her to the door, and Charlie rode home with her.

He did not say good-bye at the gate, however, but came in to pay his respects to Mrs.

Marston, but as she was busy writing to Aunt Lottie, and would not be done for half-an-hour, he said it would be as well if he overhauled Denys's cycle and looked at its nuts and bearings. It was past eight when he finally took his departure.

"Don't you worry about Audrey's cycle," he said to Denys on the doorstep, though she had not mentioned the subject. "I dare say I shall give a look at it in the morning; it's quite likely, in fact."

CHAPTER XI

RUSTING AND A RECOGNITION

Sometimes it seems unbearable—hanging about like this with nothing to do," said Charlie; "all the fellows I know are at work, earning or studying for a profession — and here am I, rusting!"

It was Denys's third visit to the Henchmans. Each time she had wondered why Charlie was at home apparently with no object in life, and evidently with nothing to do but pass each day as he thought best; but she had not liked to ask any questions, and her grandmother seldom mentioned other people's private affairs.

This afternoon Charlie had taken her into the schoolroom — his workshop they called it now—and had shown her all his electrical

appliances. Audrey had come too, and had exclaimed over their wonderfulness, but she soon tired of them, and went away before Charlie produced the last and most intricate of his models.

"How clever you must be!" Denys said, enthusiastically, as she bent over it.

And then Charlie laughed bitterly, and said that his life seemed unbearable, and that he was rusting.

Denys looked up at him, and her kind, clear eyes saw the trouble behind the bitter laughter.

"Must you?" she asked, gently.

She saw his face darken as it had done once before.

"Look here, Denys," he burst out, leaning against the table, and gripping its edge hard with his hands, "everybody thinks I don't care, that I like loafing about like this—I dare say you did—and that's what I want them to think. But I do care—awfully. Sometimes it comes over me worse than other times—it has to-day. Sometimes it seems to drive me frantic. Wasting, useless, rusting, that's what I call

my life. All the other fellows are taking their places in the world, and I am—here."

"Yes!" said Denys.

She leaned against the table near him, the electrical model between them, but neither of them had looked at it since Charlie began to speak.

Denys glanced down at it now.

"You wanted to do—this," she said, touching it softly.

"Wanted!" echoed Charlie. "Ah, it is little use wanting! Father knew how I cared about this sort of thing, and he meant to let me do it if he possibly could; but, in case of anything happening, he put my name down to get into an insurance office—two, as a matter of fact—and then he had that accident and was killed—didn't you know that? Well, I'll tell you about that afterwards—and, of course, that ended all my plans. Poor Dad! that seemed the greatest trouble he had. He knew what it would feel like to me, because he had wanted to be a doctor, and his uncle, who was his guardian, poked him into a Bank, and wouldn't listen to a word of anything else."

Charlie paused, and, diving into his waistcoat pocket, brought out a tiny locket, which he opened and passed to Denys.

"That's my father," he said, proudly.

It might have been a picture of Charlie himself. Denys looked at the pleasant, open face, and Charlie went on with his story.

"Mother wrote then to the insurance offices, and they both said just the same thing. I must take my turn for a vacancy, and it would be at the bottom when it occurred. One added that there was an age-limit—which I passed last week—so that now I have one chance left at the other office. And the days go on and on, and nothing happens, and still I wait, and at nineteen or twenty I shall have to begin at the bottom where others begin at fifteen or sixteen."

"And not be an electrical engineer either," said Denys. "What a pity!"

Charlie did not answer; he bent over his little model, and began to make it work, and Denys watched him in silence till he suddenly pushed it away and faced her again, almost fiercely.

"I wouldn't have mother or Audrey or *any one* know how I feel—for anything," he said, "especially Aunt Rachel."

"You need not fear," answered Denys, quietly. "Who is Aunt Rachel?"

"Aunt Rachel," said Charlie, "lives in Saltmarsh. She is very nice and very kind, and gives you advice, but she's very goody-goody, and likes to talk to you—you know—about religion. Don't you hate that sort of thing—being talked to, I mean?"

A smile lighted Denys's face; a happy smile that made Charlie wonder.

"I used to hate it," she said candidly; "but I don't think I should mind now, since——"

"Since what?" asked Charlie curiously. "Do you know, you are very tantalizing. You begin saying a thing, and break off in the middle. It's a habit you've got!"

Denys blushed, but her eyes met Charlie's bravely.

"I belong to the Lord Jesus now—I didn't before," she said simply.

Charlie's eyes went back to his model, and he laughed uneasily. Denys was remembering

how short a time ago she had fought against Conway's speaking to her of Jesus, remembering, too, that lady who had spoken to her at the stile on the day that she heard of Jerry's death. A sudden notion crossed her mind.

"Is your Aunt Rachel rather handsome and rather stout, and rather manly?" she asked. "Would she speak to quite a stranger?"

"That she would. You don't mean to say she spoke to you?"

Denys nodded. "I believe it must have been she. Ever since I've known you, I have been puzzled over a likeness in you to somebody."

"Humph!" said Charlie, not quite sure whether he was gratified or not, "what was your description? Rather handsome? I'll accept that part of the likeness!"

"Charlie! Char—lie!"

Audrey's voice rang through the house, and a moment later the schoolroom door opened noisily, and Audrey appeared.

"Aunt Rachel has come, and——"

Audrey stopped short, for Aunt Rachel was following close behind her, and Denys, looking up to see what Audrey was saying, saw the

doorway filled by the very lady who had spoken to her about Jesus.

She recognized her instantly, and a deep wave of colour spread over her face. With the recognition came the remembrance of the awful loneliness and sorrow that had surged over her as she sat on the stile with Dan in her arms that afternoon.

Jerry dead—Conway gone—earth empty, Heaven closed!

And then had come those kindly, unexpected words, "Jesus Christ can comfort you."

Jesus Christ *had* comforted her. As Denys thought of her sorrow and of that comfort, the hot tears rushed to her eyes. She saw Aunt Rachel's start of recognition, her shocked glance at her mourning dress, and she fought hard for the composure necessary to Charlie's introduction. But it was no use; the remembrance had touched her heart too deeply, and completely overset her. She turned away suddenly, and, hiding her face in her hands on the table, she wept for little Jerry, as she had not wept since the day that Conway came to

tell her he was dead.

She was glad that no one spoke to her or attempted consolation. She only heard the sound of the closing door, and knew by the silence that she was alone, and she felt grateful for the delicacy that had left her to weep unrestrainedly.

For a little while her grief would have its way, and then tender words came softly into her mind and soothed her.

"The Holy Ghost, the Comforter."

Ah, how different were life and death to her now! She wiped away her tears as soon as she could, and looked up. Yes, she was alone.

She went to the window and looked out on the quiet garden.

She hoped she would not have to see Aunt Rachel again to-day. Another time she would like to meet her and thank her for her words. Her eyes filled again as she thought of what she would like to say to her.

A few minutes later the door opened softly, and Charlie came in. He carried a little tray with cake and two cups of tea, and he set it

down by the electrical model.

"I wanted to show you how this worked," he said, with his ordinary manner, and yet very gently. "Mother has made the tea, so I brought it in here. Audrey said you must be tired of machinery, but I thought you weren't."

"No, indeed!" said Denys. "How kind you are!"

Charlie plunged at once into explanations and methods, and Denys sipped her tea and listened and watched with real interest. Presently Mrs. Henchman came in with the tea-pot and milk-jug to replenish their cups, and she became so engrossed in the experiments that she sent Charlie to fetch her cup and plate from the drawing-room, and sat down to finish her tea with them.

By and by the postman's knock sounded, and Audrey wandered in with a letter for her mother. She, too, stayed to watch, and Denys came to the conclusion that Aunt Rachel could not be in the drawing-room alone, and must, therefore, have gone home.

She was quite surprised when six o'clock struck, and she knew it was time to go back to

her grandmother's.

She went up to get her hat, and when she came down again Charlie had disappeared, nor did he answer when Audrey called to him that Denys was going.

"I shall walk home with you myself," announced Audrey, finding that Denys would not wait. "I never get a chance, so I will take this one. I'll just tell mother; she is talking to the washerwoman in the kitchen."

She dashed away, and came back breathless.

"Mother's love, and she says good-bye, and I'm not to stay gossiping at Mrs. Marston's gate as if I wanted to be asked in, and I'm not to go in, anyhow, because I have all my lessons to do!"

She laughed gaily as she danced along by Denys's side. She liked to say audacious things, but Denys was beginning to understand her now, and the quiet dignity of Denys's silence quieted her as nothing else would have done.

She slipped her hand through Denys's arm.

"Mother didn't mean me to tell you all that," she said, repentantly. "I do wish I didn't

say naughty things, but I do love to hear people scold, and then they say '*Audrey!*' "

She mimicked Charlie's tone exactly.

"I wish I didn't love doing naughty things," she said, wistfully.

Denys looked down at the eager little face and hesitated. She had been learning many lessons lately in the quiet hours at grandmamma's. One of them had come to her that morning.

"As the Holy Ghost saith, 'To-day, if ye will hear His voice.' "

It had seemed to her as she read the verse that it meant that when God sent opportunity into our life, He meant us to use it "to-day."

Denys was naturally of a direct turn of mind, and she had taken great pleasure in the words. And now an opportunity had come, and she hesitated. She knew she might never again find wild, merry little Audrey in such a gentle mood, and yet she hesitated still. She remembered the unexpected words spoken to herself by Aunt Rachel, and she wondered if Aunt Rachel had felt as reluctant to speak as she did now. Then she took courage and

spoke.

"Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," she said, softly.

"What does that mean?" asked Audrey, blankly.

Denys smiled, her own sunny smile.

"It's a question of love!" she said. "When the love of Jesus is in our hearts we want to please Him, and we don't love the things that make Him sorry, we begin to hate them. The Holy Spirit tells us of Jesus' love, and God has promised to give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him."

Audrey clung closer to her.

"I expect you are always good."

"I wish I were!" said Denys, humbly. "Why, Audrey, I've only just begun to love Jesus myself. Conway asked me to pray every day that God would give me His Holy Spirit, and I did, and now I love Jesus. I wish I had before!"

"Shall I pray too?" asked Audrey, wonderingly.

"Oh, do!" exclaimed Denys, earnestly.

They had reached Rockview, and Denys

caught sight of Mrs. Marston beckoning vigorously from the window.

"You had better wait a minute, Audrey," she said; "there may be a message. I'll run in and see."

Audrey leaned against the gate, and Denys ran up the path, and went in at the drawing-room window.

"Where is Charlie?" said her grandmother.

"I don't know!" said Denys.

"Well, Audrey can tell him that I have found the newspaper cutting that we spoke of, and if he likes to come up to supper, he can read it to me."

"To-night?" said Denys, doubtfully. She felt rather unwilling to ask Charlie up to-night. She thought it was a little odd of him to go off without saying good-bye to her, when he must have known she would not be two minutes putting on her hat. She felt hurt with Charlie, and her head ached with crying, and she had half a mind to say to her grandmother she did not want him. Then she remembered Charlie's gentleness to her that afternoon, and was ashamed of feeling cross

with him.

"To-night, grandma?" she repeated, with a very different intonation, an encouraging one this time.

"That was what I thought," said Mrs. Marston, appreciating the change of tone. "I have ordered something for supper that he likes."

"That settles it, then," laughed Denys. "I'll tell Audrey."

She ran back to the gate, and gave Mrs. Marston's message.

"Don't worry if he has gone out," she said. "I'll tell grandma not to wait supper."

"He had not gone out," said Audrey wisely. "I believe he had some letter that upset him. It was that one which I brought mother. Charlie went quite white when he read it, and I'm sure he meant to walk up the hill with you."

She turned homewards, and Denys went back to Mrs. Marston. She was glad now that she had not prevented Charlie's being asked to come up. She wondered if Audrey was right about the letter.

CHAPTER XII

A DIVIDING LINE

If Denys expected Charlie to tell her anything about the letter of which Audrey had spoken, she was disappointed. He came up to supper and chatted and joked in his most lively style, and made Mrs. Marston laugh so much that she declared she should not sleep a wink when bed-time came.

But for all that she enjoyed his fun immensely, and felt as if she were growing young again. She even wondered whether she and Aunt Lottie were getting antiquated and were living in a rut. She made up her mind that when Lottie came back they must have somebody young in to supper occasionally. It was not a difficult matter to have a

nice little supper, and Charlie certainly seemed to enjoy what she provided.

When they returned to the drawing-room she produced her newspaper cutting on duck farming and rearing, a subject on which she was quite an authority, and Charlie read it aloud to her, and entered on a spirited discussion about it, while Denys sat by with her fancy-work and listened.

But she was not very interested in ducks, and her thoughts soon wandered. She could not help fancying that Charlie's bright talk and rattle were covering up some deeper thing, and that when he was silent for a space, listening to her grandmother, there was a gravity and hopelessness about his face that had not been there in the afternoon, even when he had spoken of the disappointing of his hopes.

After he had gone Mrs. Marston gathered up her papers thoughtfully.

"That is a nice boy," she said. "Mrs. Henchman says his patience in this waiting time is marvellous. He never grumbles, though she thinks he had hoped to be an

engineer, if his father had lived. The insurance people are a long time in finding a vacancy for him. But he seems to take things easily!" she added, as she began to ascend the stairs.

Denys followed silently. How little people knew! When she was alone in her own room she stood at the window, looking out at the sea. There was no moon to-night, but she could see the restless, tossing line of white-tipped waves. They suited her mood. She felt restless and sorrowful, and too tired to trouble about getting into bed quickly.

She thought of her grandmother's words about Charlie's patience, of his talk with her in the afternoon, of Aunt Rachel's coming, and of her own breaking down and crying. Bit by bit she went over it all till she came to the words that had soothed her grief.

"The Holy Ghost, the Comforter!"

And He could cheer and help Charlie! Dropping on her knees, she prayed for him and for all the dear ones at home, then for Audrey. Last of all for herself.

She fell asleep thinking of Jerry. He could

never feel disappointed or sorry any more! His life was all joy now.

The next time that she met Audrey and Charlie was on a young people's cycling expedition, got up by the Rector's daughter, Gwyn Bailey. She had taken a great fancy to Denys, and for the first part of the ride entirely monopolized her attention.

At the bottom of a steep hill, however, most of the party dismounted to walk up, and Denys was just considering whether she could get up a little further, when a hand grasped her arm from behind, and Charlie's voice said—

"Don't get off, I'll help you!" and almost before Denys knew where she was, she was half-way up the hill. Indeed, it scarcely seemed steep at all with that strong hand helping her.

At the top they dismounted, and sat down on a convenient wooden seat to await the others toiling far below them, along the dusty road.

"We did that hill well," said Charlie, in a congratulatory tone. Then he added abruptly—

"I have heard from the other insurance office."

"Have you?" exclaimed Denys, delightedly. Her first thought was that now the waiting time was over; her second, that the certainty of a post there was the certainty of his giving up the electrical engineering.

She looked up at him and saw the gravity and hopelessness that she had fancied in his face the other night, intensified and deepened unmistakably, and her own face sobered.

"They say that they do not expect a vacancy for a long time to come, and they do not advise my waiting any longer," said Charlie.

"But what will you do?" asked Denys, blankly.

Charlie's answer was a long time coming. When it did his voice had a stifled tone.

"I—don't—know," he said.

"I am *so* sorry," said Denys, gravely. It seemed very little to say, but she could think of no other suitable words. She had heard Conway's future discussed quite enough to know that if Charlie had no berth promised him, and no money for the training he so much

desired, his prospects had fallen to the lowest possible ebb.

His age, his lack of experience, everything was against his finding work.

"I knew about this the night I came to supper with Mrs. Marston," Charlie went on presently, "but I couldn't have spoken of it. I should just have made a donkey of myself. So I rattled on, and made all the fun I could."

"Yes, I thought there was something," said Denys, "only, of course, I did not know what. Audrey said a letter had come."

"If I had known you guessed, I think I would have told you," said Charlie. "I felt bursting. I believe I was a bit of a donkey over it all when I went to bed. It seemed as if it all wouldn't have happened if Dad had been alive. And then, do you know—wasn't it funny?—some words came into my head. I don't make any profession of being good, you know. I'm not a little tiny bit religious, and I don't want to be, and yet I thought of these words! They were rather nice, too: 'The Holy Ghost, the Comforter.'"

"How strange!" exclaimed Denys, with

wide, surprised eyes. "Why, I was thinking about you—your not being able to be an engineer, and your being rather miserable and all that—and those very words came into my head, and I just knelt down and asked God to —to—cheer you up."

"Did you?" There was something in Charlie's tone that Denys did not understand. She wondered if she ought to have told him that! She felt suddenly shy of him.

The foremost of the party were just breasting the top of the hill, and she would have waited for them, but Charlie rose, and motioned her to mount.

"I promised Gwyn to lead the way from here," he said; "it's a new road to most of the others."

They rode on ahead together, and Denys racked her brains to think of something to say, but in vain. Charlie, however, himself broke the silence after a while, and she saw that his mind was still busy with his future.

"It feels a bit odd," he said, "to have nothing whatever to look forward to. The insurance office was not what I wanted, but it was some-

thing. Now there's nothing."

"No," said Denys, slowly.

"I used to plan all sorts of jolly things," said Charlie, his voice growing more animated as he thought of what his future *could* hold. "I was going to work hard, and get on with my profession, and I think I could have made something at it. Then, when I began to earn, I was going to save up, and get some money in the Bank; then, if father needed it, I could pay him back what he had spent."

Denys smiled.

"Oh yes!" she said, eagerly. How often had Conway confided just such plans to her!

"And then," said Charlie, ending up as Conway had never ended, "I should marry a nice girl—a Christian girl—and we'd have a jolly little home, and live together happy ever after!"

"Oh, but you couldn't—not unless you were a Christian yourself," said Denys, quickly.

"Why ever not?" demanded Charlie. "What would be the matter with me, I should like to know? That's a bit rough on a fellow if he is straight and steady and all that. Wher-

ever did you get such an idea?"

"I've always been taught it—it's in the Bible, too," said Denys, with burning cheeks.

She felt unutterably vexed and disappointed that she should have been the one to throw a fresh obstacle in the way of Charlie's career and hopes.

Why ever had he brought up such a subject, and why should he be so hot over it?

"Where, in the Bible?" said Charlie, incredulously. "I never heard of it before."

Denys did not know where. She had an indistinct remembrance of some text about "only in the Lord," which referred to the marriage of Christians, but she was quite convinced that she had been taught the fact.

Charlie took advantage of her lack of knowledge.

"It isn't there," he said, triumphantly. "You think such a lot of a person being a Christian, that you ought to be pleased that I want the best sort of girl."

Denys was silent. She felt that her lack of knowledge put her at a disadvantage. It seemed dreadful to set herself on a pinnacle of

goodness, and seem to disdain those who did not think as she did, and yet—and yet—she had been taught that this was God's rule for His children.

The offence of the Cross.

The words rushed into her mind. Was *this* the offence of the Cross? Was this part of its meaning for her and for other Christian men and girls?

Charlie glanced at her downcast face once or twice.

"Don't be cross, Denys," he said softly.

Cross! Hot tears sprang to her eyes at the injustice of that. Nor could she regain her usual bright manner. The pleasure of the ride was spoilt for her.

How could she know that Charlie rode home and thought of her as the one girl in all the world for him!

When she went to bed that night she tried to find some text about the marrying of Christians, but she could hit upon nothing, and she had to put her light out at last with an unsatisfied mind.

She dreamed that she was doing her lessons

in the nursery at home. and that Jerry was calling her.

"Denys! Den—ys!"

"Yes, dear!" she cried, starting up.

But the moonlight that lay across the room showed her where she was, and, as she realized it, she heard her name again, "Denys!"

She jumped out of bed, and softly opened her grandmother's door.

"Are you calling, grandma? Is anything the matter?"

"My dear, there's a mouse on my bed! It has been nibbling in the corner for a long time, and now it has run up on the bed. What shall we do?"

Denys turned up the gas.

"I'll fetch the cat," she said, "then the mouse will be gone for good and all!"

"But the cat is downstairs."

"Oh yes!" said Denys calmly.

She slipped on her dressing-gown and shoes, lit a candle, and went down.

Even to the anxious grandmother it did not seem long before she returned with the cat and a jug of milk. The latter she deposited on the

table, and turned her attention to the cat.

"There will be a scramble, grandma!" she warned.

And there was; but the cat was triumphant, and retired into Denys's room to enjoy its capture.

"What is the milk for?" asked grandma.

"To send you to sleep again!" said Denys, beginning with deft fingers to warm some over the spirit-lamp.

Grandma lay watching the face so intent over the saucepan. How childish it was, with the curling hair hanging in pretty confusion round it! She wondered what the child was thinking about. But she would not wake her up any further by talking. She drew her Bible towards her to find a verse to rest her mind upon, and help her to go to sleep again.

Denys saw the movement.

"Grandma!" she said, impulsively, "is it in the Bible that Christians ought only to marry people who are Christians?"

"Yes, certainly!" said the grandma. Was *that* what the child was thinking about?

"We were discussing it to-day on our cycle

ride," said Denys, pouring out the boiling milk, "and I can't find the text about it."

Mrs. Marston turned the pages readily.

"First Corinthians, seven, nineteen," she said. "'*She is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.*' Then again, Second Corinthians, six, fourteen. '*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?*'"

"Unbelievers?" questioned Denys.

"'*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.*' '*For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light,*'" quoted Mrs. Marston, softly.

Denys moved about quietly, putting away the saucepan. She took the cat downstairs again, bade her grandmother good-night, and put out the lights.

Yes, there was a dividing line. God, not she, had set its bounds.

One side—with Jesus Christ.

The other side—without Jesus Christ.

There were tears on Denys's pillow that night. But how could Charlie know that they were there, and that they were there not for being called cross, not for a far-distant possible husband, but for the boy-friend who had ranked himself on that other side?

CHAPTER XIII

THE WHOLE WORLD

"Mother," said Charlie abruptly, "did you ever hear it said, that a nice Christian girl should not marry a fellow, simply because he did not make a religious profession?"

Mrs. Henchman was busy with some intricate embroidery.

"Never!" she said, abstractedly. "Why shouldn't she?"

"Exactly," said Charlie.

Mrs. Henchman laid down her work and glanced at her son's face. It had just occurred to her that it was the first time she had ever heard him speak of marriage in anything but the most casual way. He was, however, bend-

ing over a drawing he was making, and her eyes went back to her work.

"Why shouldn't she?" she repeated. "If he is a good, upright, nice fellow, why shouldn't she? However did you get hold of such an idea?"

"We were discussing the subject at Gwyn Bailey's cycle ride," said Charlie; "the idea is supposed to come from the Bible, but I said it wasn't there."

"Your Aunt Rachel is the great Bible authority," said Mrs. Henchman, contentedly, "ask her. Besides—a religious profession—what does it amount to with most people?"

"Oh, well," said Charlie, "not a hypocrite, of course. But you know what I mean. There is a sort of difference between people—a different way of thinking about things, I suppose it is."

Mrs. Henchman looked doubtful.

"I don't understand it myself," she said, a little uneasily. "Your dear father was as nice a man as ever lived, and as good. But when they brought him from that fatal cycle-ride, he said everything was different, and life was

changed for him! Well, so it was, for life was ended, though I don't think he meant that exactly. He talked about our Lord a great deal, and about being such a great sinner, and he said he wished he had been to church more, and asked me to go. Well, I have been as he asked me, and I've done my best for you and Audrey; but I really don't feel any different from what I did before. By the bye," she added, "we had better go to church next Sunday morning. It really has been too hot these last two weeks!"

"Very well," said Charlie. Church-going had no special interest for him, but he felt it his duty to accompany his mother whenever she wished to go.

His mother's thoughts had gone off on his father's illness and death, and Charlie did not recall them to the former subject of conversation. Nor did he intend to ask Aunt Rachel to solve his doubts. But, in spite of his assertion to the contrary, he could not help wondering whether Denys *could* prove her argument from the Bible.

Sunday morning found him with his mother

and Audrey in the little old parish church. It was built close to the beach, and in the pauses in the service the rush of the waves and the shifting of the shingle came in at the open windows. Charlie liked to listen to it when the sermon was long or dull.

They were not too early, and had hardly settled in their places when the bell stopped, the organ began to sound, and the choir and clergy filed in.

Charlie received an energetic nudge from his mother.

"Look!" she whispered. "Why, it's Dolly Allan's friend—the Rev. Hugh Owen, Vicar of All Saints, Whitecliff!"

Charlie looked. Mr. Bailey's tall, thin form was absent, and a stranger walked in his place —a stranger whose grave strong face made Charlie think suddenly of a hymn they had sung when Queen Victoria died—

"The Saints of God."

That was his first thought, and his second was that here was a man to whom a fatherless young man might tell his difficulties and perplexities, and find the best help and counsel.

If this were indeed the Vicar of All Saints, Whitecliff, he did not wonder that Dolly Allan loved to visit Whitecliff.

"Are you sure it is Mr. Owen?" he whispered back to his mother.

Mrs. Henchman nodded emphatically.

"I've been introduced to him," she whispered.

Then she frowned at Charlie to intimate that there had been quite enough talking, and turned her attention to the service.

There was no curate at Saltmarsh, and Mr. Owen took the service alone.

In the ordinary way Charlie went through it quite mechanically, but the voice that read the service to-day seemed to put a new meaning into the prayers and the lessons, and he could not help following.

Even in the singing he was ashamed of his wandering thoughts. That stranger at the reading-desk was so evidently praising God from his heart, so sincerely singing the words: "We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood," that they came with new force to

Charlie's heart. He longed for the sermon. He felt sure that it would be something to listen to and remember.

But, after all, when it came Charlie heard nothing of that sermon.

There was a moment's pause as Mr. Owen faced his congregation from the pulpit, a pause long enough to be felt. Charlie could hear the congregation round him settling down to listen. In the stillness the breaking of the waves sounded across from the shore.

Then in deep, quiet tones, that thrilled through Charlie, and in all his after-life came back to him in connection with the words, Mr. Owen gave out his text—

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

That was all Charlie heard.

Audrey sat with her eyes riveted on the preacher. He was telling just what she wanted to know—the way to find Jesus Christ, but Charlie was not listening to that. The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, had

entered his heart and discerned its thoughts and intents.

What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world!

The whole world! A few weeks ago that had meant to him his future, his career, the electrical engineering upon which he had set his whole heart since boyhood.

Just now this career seemed beyond his reach, but suppose that to-morrow it lay within the grasp of his hand!

Suppose that to-morrow he could go forward as he had planned to do, that he went on and attained the highest point of his ambition, that he reached his goal!

What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

He could not tell if the preacher had spoken the words again or if they had sounded only in his own consciousness. How solemnly they sounded!

But there was something else that seemed even more than his career, to be the whole world to him.

Denys!

He started as at that instant his eyes fell upon her across the church. He had looked in vain for her when he first came in, but she must have moved her place a little, so as to hear the preacher better, and now he could see her plainly.

Her gentle, earnest face was lifted a little, and a beam of sunlight had fallen across her red-brown hair, turning it to burnished gold.

And she was the whole world to him.

To win her, to make a home for her, he was content to lay aside even his hopes of the career he had longed for; he was ready to begin at the very bottom, if only he might begin at something which would promise a moderate income for himself and Denys.

What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

Suppose he won Denys—that she gave him her love as he had given his to her. Suppose they went hand-in-hand through life, suppose he gained his whole world! What then?

"And lose his own soul!" Involuntarily the words rose up in his mind.

Like a flash he knew what Denys had meant

when she had said that a Christian must only marry a Christian.

Could Denys go hand-in-hand with him to their lives' end, loving and being loved, to part for ever on the threshold of eternal life?

One to go to God, the other to—"lose his own soul."

"If he shall gain the whole world!" He might have his career and his love. He might win both, and yet there was something infinitely more important, infinitely more precious —his own soul!

In the tumult of his thoughts he heard nothing, noticed nothing around him. The rising of the congregation at the words: "Now to God the Father," absolutely startled him. The sermon over!

Mechanically he put his money into the plate, he sang the closing hymn with the others, he knelt and waited for the accustomed blessing.

But from the chancel came words that Charlie had never heard before—words that seemed to voice his awful need, and to bring a calm over the tumult of his heart—

"O Saviour of the world, Who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord."

There was a moment's pause. Charlie held his breath to listen, and then softly and clearly in the stranger's deep, restful voice came the Benediction—

"The Almighty Lord, Who is a most strong Tower to all them that put their trust in Him, to Whom all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, do bow and obey, be now and evermore thy defence; and make thee know and feel that there is none other Name under heaven given to man, in Whom, and through Whom, thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

There were great tears in Charlie's eyes which had to be rubbed away before he could lift his head and follow the others out of church.

One idea only possessed him. He must find out how he was to obtain Christ's salvation.

Whom could he ask?

In the porch his hand was grasped by a tall young fellow.

"Hullo, Charlie!" he said. "Why, you are not altered a bit!"

"Cecil Greyburne!" exclaimed Charlie, looking up in his face in amaze, "fancy! You here again, old chap!"

Cecil laughed gaily.

"Seems like our old school-days, doesn't it? I wish they were back again, don't you? I'm stewed in an office now, but I've got over for the Sunday to my aunt's. Good luck to her!"

Charlie nodded. In an instant his resolve was taken. He had liked Cecil very much in those old school-days, though they had not met for three years past. He remembered very well a letter he had had from Cecil, shortly after the Greyburnes had left Saltmarsh. In it Cecil told him that he had been converted, that he was a Christian now, and he wished Charlie would think about such things.

Charlie had appreciated the letter, though he had never answered it, nor felt any wish to follow Cecil's example. But this morning

that wish was strong upon him. Here was some one who could explain about the salvation he needed, some one whom he did not mind asking.

"Can you come for a walk with me this afternoon?" he said, abruptly.

"With pleasure," Cecil answered, heartily.

Charlie was very quiet at dinner. Mrs. Henchman talked incessantly of Mr. Owen, and the probabilities of his filling Mr. Bailey's place while that gentleman took his holiday, but neither of her children seemed inclined to talk, and directly the meal was ended, Charlie took himself off.

He met Cecil at the appointed place, and turned off through the town towards the fields.

As they passed up a narrow little street Cecil stopped suddenly.

"Wait a half-minute," he said. "I am out of cigarettes. I dare say I can get something that will do to put up with here."

Without waiting for any reply, he stepped across the road, and Charlie saw a small cottage window filled up with sweets and

smokers' requisites.

A burly working-man stood in the adjoining doorway, but perceiving a possible customer, he drew back and disappeared with Cecil into the shop.

Charlie stood alone on the pavement. Was this his Christian friend? Could *he* tell him the way to find the Saviour of the world? He had half a mind to cut away round the next corner, and leave Cecil to take his walk alone.

But a softer thought prevailed. His own need was overwhelming; he *must* settle this question and be at peace, and he remembered that long-ago letter of Cecil's, and the concern about his spiritual well-being that, of all his friends, Cecil alone had shown; and he stood still and waited.

Cecil rejoined him in a minute.

"The fellow had no change," he said, offering Charlie a cigarette. Then, as Charlie shook his head, he lit one for himself, and they strolled on.

"I wondered if you would recollect me," Cecil said, presently.

"You are not much changed," said Charlie. Then, making a huge effort, he added, "Do you remember a letter you wrote me once?"

Cecil did not look at him.

"Very likely," he said, awkwardly.

"I never thought about those things—till to-day," said Charlie, plunging headlong into his subject, "but you were at church this morning—you heard that text—'lose his own soul.' I want you to tell me how to be saved."

There was a long pause. A dull red colour crept up into Cecil's face, and spread to his forehead and dyed even his ears.

When he spoke at last it was in a voice utterly changed from his usual easy tones.

"Charlie," he said, "I'm not fit to tell you anything about *that*. I've gone away from God for a long time."

Charlie looked up at him, startled, and yet, somehow, his heart seemed lightened. That might explain the buying of those cigarettes on Sunday afternoon!

"Is there no going back?" he said, very low and very wistfully.

A sudden bright light flashed over Cecil's

face.

"Yes," he said, "there is! I never thought of it before. 'This man receiveth sinners.' Oh! I have been *so* miserable, but I can go back."

They were out in the country now, walking between hedges gay with the first autumn tints. Cecil's head was up, there was a light in his eyes and a gladness in his face that made Charlie wonder.

" 'This man receiveth sinners,' " Cecil repeated, half to himself.

Then he looked at his companion.

"Charlie!" he said, "how can I help you? What do you want?"

"I want Jesus Christ," said Charlie simply. "Tell me how you found Him—when you were converted."

"I prayed," said Cecil, slowly. "I remember I just knelt down and I said, 'Lord Jesus! I'm an awful sinner, but Thou did'st die for me. Forgive me and wash away my sin in Thy Precious Blood, and take me for Thine own to-day.' That was all, I think."

In the earnestness of their talk the two

had paused beside a half-opened gate. Within it was a newly reaped field, with the corn standing in shocks. No one was in sight anywhere. Charlie gave a glance round and walked through the gate, Cecil following wonderingly.

Charlie went on till they were well out of sight of the gate then, between a shock of corn and the hedge, he knelt down on the golden stubble.

"Pray for me, Cecil," he said, in a stifled voice.

Kneeling beside him, Cecil prayed. Only in short, unpolished sentences, just the cry of his own heart. For forgiveness for himself, for grace to keep steadfast, for Charlie to accept Christ as his Saviour.

And then in low, trembling tones Charlie spoke. The words which had calmed the tumult of his heart in the morning came back to his memory and to his lips: "O Saviour of the world, Who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood hast redeemed me, save me and help me."

When the two friends rose from their knees,

they stood a few minutes looking out over the sunlit golden field. A lark rose up beside them carolling its song of praise. It seemed a hallowed place to them both, the place where they had met God. At last they turned away silently by the way they had come.

If they had passed to the other side of that shock of corn by which they knelt, what would they have seen?

Only the figure of a woman, seated on the ground, her face bent down to her knees, and hidden in her hands.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CORNSTALKS

It was two days before Charlie saw Denys. They happened upon one another in a shop, and Denys's first words to him when they stood together outside noted the difference there was in him.

"You look as if you had had good news," she said.

Then, as they walked up the hill, he told her of the change that had come to his whole life on Sunday.

She had no idea how her face brightened and brightened as he talked, till he said laughingly: "You look as if you had had good news!"

"I have," she said. "Oh, I am so very, very

glad! Do you know," she added, thoughtfully, "I begin to understand now what father and mother and Conway felt when I was not a Christian, and why they wrote such happy letters when I told them that now I was."

"I should like to thank Mr. Owen for choosing that text," said Charlie.

"Isn't he nice?" said Denys, eagerly. "You know, grandma has known him for years. It was he who married my mother and father. He is coming to tea with us this afternoon."

"You lucky girl! I wonder if I saw him in the street any time whether I should dare to speak to him!"

"He would like to know," said Denys.

Half-an-hour later the Henchmans' garden gate swung open, and Denys, wheeling her cycle, hurried up the path.

Audrey espied her and ran out.

"Hullo, Denys! You are quite a stranger."

Denys smiled. "I have not come to stay now, it is almost lunch time," she said. "Is Charlie in?"

Audrey shook her head.

"Will you give him grandma's love and ask

him to come to tea this afternoon at four o'clock? Don't forget, Audrey; it is very particular."

"Frock coat and top hat?" asked Audrey, teasingly.

But Denys only repeated—

"Don't forget," and sped away again.

She had told Mrs. Marston in a few words of what Charlie had said to her, and to her great surprise and delight she had been despatched post-haste to invite Charlie to tea to meet Mr. Owen. She only hoped that scatter-brained Audrey would remember.

She was relieved to see Charlie cycling down the hill, even though he was going at a break-neck speed. She signalled him to stop, and delivered her message.

Charlie flushed nervously.

"I say, Denys, it's awfully kind of Mrs. Marston, but I don't know that I shall be able to say anything, you know. I only thought I'd like to, if I saw him a minute alone."

"Why, of *course*," said Denys. "And I did not tell grandma you wanted to thank him. It was just her idea that you would enjoy

to see a little more of him. *We* shan't have to talk; we shall listen to him and grandma, and hand the tea and bread and butter. I do hope nobody else will call."

"So do I," said Charlie fervently.

As it turned out, Charlie did see the Vicar of Whitecliff for a minute alone.

They both arrived at Rockview at the same instant, and as Charlie held the gate open and met Mr. Owen's smile of thanks, all the nervousness he had felt fled away, and Mr. Owen's first words as they passed behind the evergreens which sheltered the winding path up to the house, opened the way for what he wanted to say.

"I think I saw you in church on Sunday," Mr. Owen said.

Charlie looked up with his frank, pleasant smile.

"Yes," he said. "I have a great deal to thank you for, Mr. Owen. That text you preached from has made everything different for me. I thought I was all right and a fairly decent fellow, till you gave that out. But it's all right now," he went on, cheerfully. "I've

given myself to Jesus Christ and I wanted you to know."

Mr. Owen held out his hand, and grasped Charlie's warmly.

"I'm very glad," he said, heartily. Then he added in a lower, graver voice, "It's a great encouragement to me to hear it."

That was a very happy tea-party. Denys had expected only to listen, but somehow she found herself talking as if to an old friend.

Mr. Owen was very interested in Charlie's knowing Dolly Allan, and he told Mrs. Marston all about her class for the choirboys of All Saints.[1]

"The world is wonderfully small," he said. "I have had a very curious instance of that to-day. This morning I received a call from a Mrs. Reid, who comes from Wellfield, a little town not far from Whitecliff. Two of my choirboys, the twins, Fritz and Carl Evans, are her nephews. Mrs. Reid and her husband had a flourishing cyclists' rest in Wellfield, and some little time ago their shop was burned down, and it was feared these twins had per-

[1]See *The Boys of All Saints,* by Mabel Mackintosh.

ished in the fire. By a seeming miracle, however, they had left the house just before it broke out.

"Shortly after that fire, Mr. Reid and his son were both brought to the knowledge of Christ's salvation. They had been used to doing a Sunday trade, but they gave this up completely, the only drawback to their new-found happiness being Mrs. Reid's attitude of absolute hatred of anything good or of any change in them.

"Forced to give up the Sunday business, she made it a rule to go for some excursion every Sunday, and she forbade any mention in her presence of God or of Christ, and I fancy, from what she told me to-day, she made it very unpleasant for everybody if her command was disobeyed.

"But she could not get away from the thought of God, try as she would. The new shop which was built prospered wonderfully, in spite of the loss of the Sunday trade, which was considerable. So much so, that with this work and the unrest of her heart she got thoroughly out of health, and came here to her

sister's for a complete change.

"On Sunday last she took a walk in the afternoon, and sat down in a cornfield to rest.

"By and by she heard footsteps, which stopped on the other side of the shock of corn against which she leaned, and to her utter amazement, what seemed to be a young man's voice said—

" 'Pray for me.'

"She was so angry at the words and at being caught, so to speak, that she wanted to spring to her feet and rush away, but something seemed to hold her back and keep her still.

"Then there came a second young man's voice in words of such simple, earnest prayer that her heart seemed to melt, and she could scarcely keep from sobbing aloud.

"For this voice told of having wandered away from God, of resisting the Holy Spirit, and then pleaded the words, 'This man receiveth sinners,' as the hope for coming back to God and being accepted. Then the same voice prayed that his companion might find

Christ as his Saviour too.

"Afterwards the first young man said something, but she only caught the first and the last words, 'O Saviour of the world—save me and help me.'

"And those two prayers were just the cry of her own soul. Out in the cornfield, where she least expected it, Christ came and spoke to her rebellious, wandering heart. She stifled her sobs and kept still till the young men, whoever they were, went away, and then she threw herself on her knees and yielded herself to God, confessing all the sin of her whole life, and asking forgiveness through the atoning Blood of Christ.

"This morning she heard accidentally that I was here, and, remembering that I had once spoken to her very earnestly about her soul, she came to see me."

Denys drew a long breath as the Vicar finished his story, and her face was radiant.

"Wonderful!" said Mrs. Marston. "Who could those young men have been?"

Charlie's face was in the shadow, and he and Denys said nothing, only their eyes met

with a flash of recognition, for Denys had heard enough of Charlie's walk with Cecil Greyburne to be under no delusion as to who the young men were.

How wonderful, how very wonderful it seemed, and oh, how happy being a Christian made one!

That was just Charlie's feeling too.

When at last Mr. Owen rose to say good-bye, it seemed impossible for the time to have slipped by to nearly seven o'clock; but the sun was dipping down into the sea, and Charlie and Denys were obliged to believe the clock.

They both went down to the gate with their guest, and when he reached it he turned and looked down into their young, eager faces.

"My children," he said, "keep busy for Jesus Christ."

He turned homewards, and Denys and Charlie went slowly and thoughtfully back to Mrs. Marston.

Charlie spent the next fortnight in answer-

ing advertisements and in watching for answers.

But none came.

It was a weary waiting time. The weather suddenly changed and set in wet; there were no cycle rides, and he could not be constantly running up to Mrs. Marston's to pass away some of the hours, which hung more heavily on his hands now than they had at any time since his father's death had ended his hope of his engineering career.

The outlook from the windows on to the dripping garden, carpeted with sodden yellow autumn leaves, seemed to represent the dreariness of his life's outlook.

And to add to his forlornness, it had suddenly dawned upon him that Denys was not a fixture at her grandmother's, and that only a few weeks more would elapse before Miss Marston would return, and Denys would fly home on the wings of the wind to her precious mother, and to all the interests of the happy home life she was so fond of talking about.

When he thought of this aggravation of his griefs he threw himself into an armchair with

his back to the light, and gave himself up to his gloomy feelings.

He was startled by the opening of the door, and by the appearance of a water-proofed figure with a bright smile.

"It isn't raining!" said Denys's cheerful voice, "so grandma has sent me to the Point to see the high tide, and I want you and Audrey."

A salt sea wind and unlimited spray, and laughter and cheery conversation did wonders for Charlie that afternoon, but there was something deeper needed, something more lasting.

Denys gave it to him before she went home.

"They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me!" she said. "That's a big Me, Charlie!"

Charlie flashed a grateful look at her, and his old happy smile beamed out.

"Thank you," he said. "I have been forgetting." Then he added, gravely—

"Is that 'keeping busy for Jesus Christ,' Denys?"

Denys gave an answering smile as she thought of the friend who had so bidden them.

"Somehow," she said, "Saltmarsh seems empty since Mr. Owen went back to Whitecliff."

Another week passed, and Charlie answered more advertisements, and waited again in vain for replies; but now, whenever he felt downhearted and impatient he reminded himself of Denys's medicine.

"They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me."

One beautiful October day Audrey went up to Rockview to spend the afternoon with Denys.

They were amusing themselves in the garden with chat and fancy-work when they saw Charlie climbing the hill below them.

"There!" said Audrey, vexedly, "that is always the way! Charlie sees plenty of you, and he might have stopped away just the afternoon I have got you."

"He has a letter in his hand," said Denys; "perhaps he has a reply from one of those advertisements! Don't damp his ardour, Audrey; a boy's pleasure is so easily spoiled."

"He does not think about mine," pouted

Audrey. But she was more amenable to Denys's gentle guidance than to any one else's, and so, when Charlie walked up the garden, she did not greet him with the cross words which were in her mind.

As he came near to them he waved the letter he was carrying.

"An answer?" asked Denys, eagerly.

But he shook his head.

"Better," he said. "Read it!"

Denys opened the envelope, but as she drew out the letter, Charlie took it from her.

"I'll read it," he said; "the writing is like a spider crawling. Audrey, you can listen too."

Audrey drew near. She felt quite rewarded for having kept back her scolding, and Charlie began—

" 'My dear Charles.' "

He paused. "It's from that uncle who made father go into a Bank when he wanted to be a doctor," he explained to Denys.

"Uncle William!" cried Audrey, incredulously.

" 'My dear Charles,' " repeated Charlie,

without noticing Audrey. "'I have laid by a few hundreds, intending to leave them to you at my death; but during the last few days it has occurred to me that they might be of more use to you now, if you should have any great wish to enter a profession. I would like you to talk over this proposition with your mother, and if you have any such wish which this will fulfil, I will come and see you and talk matters over. If you prefer to leave the money where it is for future use I shall be equally willing.

"'Your affectionate uncle,

"'WILLIAM HENCHMAN.

"'P. S.—It gives me additional pleasure in suggesting this, that from time to time I hear a very good account of you. I might add that I am leaving for the Continent in ten days' time. If you desire to see me, it would be convenient to fix an early date.'"

"Oh, how good!" cried Denys, impulsively.

"Just fancy!—Uncle William!" said Audrey.

"Isn't it grand?" said Charlie, with shining

eyes.

"What did mother say?" asked Audrey.

But Charlie did not answer that. His mother had put her two hands on his shoulders and kissed him.

"My dear, good, patient boy, I am so very, very glad," she had said.

It seemed too much like praising himself to repeat that, but Charlie treasured the words none the less.

"Sit down and tell us all about it," said Denys. "Will you stay to tea and see grandma?"

"I won't stay to tea. I must write to Uncle William; and, besides, this is Audrey's visiting day. But I thought I must just run up and tell you. I'll go back now and send my letter off, and come up for a few minutes this evening. You two can tell Mrs. Marston, and I'll hear what she thinks then."

He went off whistling cheerily, and the two girls stood looking after him.

"I think," said Audrey, penitently, "that I am perhaps rather selfish. Charlie did think about me, after all, and I do generally think

about myself first."

"Have you been praying for the Holy Spirit since we talked about it?" asked Denys, softly.

Audrey nodded.

"I think I love Jesus now—I know I do," she added, firmly, "only sometimes I wonder how He can care about such a naughty little girl! Does He ever get tired of loving us?" she asked, wistfully.

"Never," said Denys.

"You will be going home soon?" said Audrey, clinging to her. "What shall I do when you are gone?"

Denys put her arms round the little girl.

"We can write to one another," she said; "and besides, Audrey, Jesus Christ never goes away from us, and we must ask every day for the Holy Spirit to teach us more about Him."

That night, when the moonlight lay in a silver glory over the sea, Denys knelt for a long time at her window.

There seemed so much to think about.

First, there was Charlie's good news. The beginning of the accomplishment of all his

hopes. He had been up to supper, and told them of all it meant; the leaving home to attend a training college; the going out into life, and taking his place at last among the workers of the world; his uncle's kindness, and the fulfillment of the promise, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me."

And the second thought was that she herself was soon returning home. The realization of how short a part of her three months' absence still remained, had come upon her unexpectedly when Audrey spoke of it. How full her life seemed now to what it had been! She pondered over this for a long time. What was the cause? Was it because she had taken Jesus Christ into her life, and all time and all eternity were hers because she was His?

She was going home! She fell asleep with a smile on her lips.

CHAPTER VX

OLD LAMPS FOR NEW

Tony sat at the nursery table, bending laboriously over an exercise book. His face and his hands were smudged with ink stains, but not a blot was on the book before him, and he looked at it critically and proudly.

Denys had never seen him do home-lessons, and if there were a blot on his book all the joy of showing her what he had grown up to would be gone.

For Denys was coming home to-night! Her three months' absence was over, and she was coming home!

Tony looked round the nursery with observant eyes.

A bright little fire burned in the grate.

Baby's clothes lay in a neat pile on the chair, there were no toys scattered on the floor, and the towels hung evenly on the rail.

It was all very tidy. Just like Denys used to have it, Tony said to himself.

And then his eyes were lifted suddenly to a picture on the wall—a picture that had not been there when Denys went away.

Only once since his mother hung it there had Tony gone to bed without a good-night look at the little face in that picture.

That night he had cried himself to sleep, broken-heartedly, because he had forgotten it. If Denys had been at home, he would have called to her as Jerry used to do, and she would have put on his shoes and his dressing-gown and taken him down to give that good-night look at the little child-face, with its rosy tinted cheeks and big dark eyes, and curly brown hair, that looked down so peacefully from the nursery wall.

It had not even occurred to him to call to Gertrude that night. There was always an undefined bustle about Gertrude when she saw him to bed in the evening, and a sort of finality

about her closing of the night nursery door, and her "good-night, my dear, make haste and go to sleep," which seemed to say—

"Now you are finished with."

He had lain awake hoping his mother would come in as she went up to bed, but she had gone to her room directly after tea with a cold, and she did not come out again that evening.

So lonely little Tony, who missed Jerry more than any one suspected, had wept and wept and had fallen asleep at last, with the tears still wet upon his cheeks.

Now, as he looked up at Jerry's gentle little face, he wondered if the nursery would feel lonely when Denys came home.

And Denys was coming home to-night! There were chrysanthemums in the drawing-room and dining-room, and Gertrude had on her best blouse, and Lizzie had been smartening up the kitchen all day!

At that very moment, resplendent in a wonderfully frilled new apron, she opened the door and looked in: "What's the time, Master Tony? my clock's stopped."

Then she glanced at his ink-smudged face and hands.

"You've got a bit inky, Master Tony; let me take the flannel to your face, shall I?" she said, good-naturedly.

Tony took the suggestion amiably.

"Don't splash my book then; haven't I kept it lovely and clean?" he said proudly. "Denys hasn't seen me do home-lessons before."

"Fine!" said Lizzie. "I haven't felt so happy for three months! You ought to see my kitchen table, Master Tony. I've fair scrubbed the very wood away!" Tony followed her out to the kitchen, but he had hardly time to look at all her preparations when the door bell rang, and with a rush all the family were out in the hall, the front door was flung wide, and Denys stepped into a flood of light and love.

"How you have grown!" exclaimed her father, taking her rug-strap.

"Why, you have put up your hair!" cried Gertrude, seizing her umbrella.

"My *dear* child!" said her mother.

But Tony said nothing. He had to wait till the older and taller ones had had their turn.

Then he flung himself upon her, crept up into her arms, and hid his face in her soft fur, hugging her tight, and almost smothering her with kisses.

And Denys said nothing either. She was glad to hide her face against Tony's, and return his kisses, for great tears were in her eyes.

The feel of clinging arms about her neck once more had brought home to her afresh the miss of Jerry's welcome. And yet those clinging arms were a solace. Even in the moment as she crossed the hall to the cheerful, lighted dining-room with Tony still clasped close in her arms, she knew that she had come back to a world of children's love, and that Tony was glad, so glad, so very glad to have her home again.

She set Tony gently down and looked round the familiar sitting-room where tea-supper waited so invitingly.

"I expect you are very tired, dear," said her mother. "Will you go up-stairs or lay your things down here?"

Denys threw off her jacket and hat.

"I've been picturing this room with tea ready all day," she said.

"What a nice frock," said Tony, gazing up at her admiringly, "it makes you look pretty."

Denys laughed as she glanced down at her soft grey tweed frock.

"Grandma gave me this," she said, "and she made me wear it for the journey, because she said they would all be on the station to see me off, and you would all see me when I arrived, and people did not wear their old things for travelling as they did when she was young."

"I should think not!" said Gertrude.

They made quite a long affair of the meal, for all of them had some history to tell Denys. There was the last news of Conway, and Tony's experiences of home-lessons, and Gertrude's latest school gossip and delight at being elected captain of the hockey team. Mrs. Brougham had promised to have the Missionary Working Party next week, and Mr. Brougham had a very interesting case on at the Courts.

"Well, and how did you leave grandma and

Aunt Lottie?" said Mrs. Brougham at last, and then it was Denys's turn to talk. When supper was over she went out into the kitchen to see Lizzie.

"It is nice to have you back, Miss," said Lizzie, appreciatively, "it hasn't seemed the same home since you went away. Not but what," she added condescendingly, "me and Miss Gertrude have got on very well together. She does work quick, to be sure; she just comes out here and flies round, and before you can look she has done her job, and you hear the piano going again."

Denys laughed.

"You won't have been in a kitchen much lately, I'll be bound," pursued Lizzie, who was going to do her share of talking now; "you'll be missing your grandma's grand servants."

"I don't know," said Denys; "you see, Lizzie, 'be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.'"

"But they was grand servants, and they did everything very nice, didn't they?" persisted Lizzie.

"Oh yes! but you know, Lizzie, Cook was only a little scullery-maid when she first went to service, and Mary was a little general like you."

Lizzie's eyes were opened very wide.

"Were they really, now, Miss Denys! Perhaps I shall be a grand servant one day then! There's the door-bell; it's your 'box,' I expect."

It was. Lizzie superintended its being carried up to the landing, and Denys went back to the dining-room and gathered up her hat and jacket.

She dreaded going up to her old room inexpressibly. Tony had informed her in a letter that he had been promoted to Willie's room, and the thought of the night nursery lonely and silent, bereft of its two little cribs, had weighed heavily on her heart since she heard it.

But when she went up the stairs, turned the familiar handle, she opened the door into a softly-lighted room with a small, cheerful fire, and beside her own bed stood a little cot, on whose white pillow baby Maude slumbered peacefully.

Denys took it all in in one glance, and she turned to her mother, who was close behind, threw her arms round her, and laid her head on her shoulder.

"Oh, mother, mother," she said, brokenly, "you've given me baby!"

Very quickly, and yet very slowly, passed that first week at home.

Denys's only regret in it was that she did not hear where Charlie was going to college, nor when. Having known so much of his plans she would just have liked to know that, but Saltmarsh, and its life outside her grandmother's home, seemed to have dropped completely out of her existence. Perhaps it was this which made the week seem so long.

She wished she had asked Audrey to write. Late one November afternoon, the front door bell rung loudly, and Lizzie was heard ushering some one into the drawing-room.

"Please, Mistress, it's a gentleman—Mr. Henchman," she said, full of importance, having picked up the name from some of Denys's stories of her doings at Saltmarsh.

Denys sprang up, her face all alight.

"Mother! it must be Charlie! How jolly of him to come! Where can he be going! This place isn't the junction for anywhere."

Mrs. Brougham laid aside her work and went to the drawing-room. In a minute she returned, and it was indeed Charlie himself who followed her.

"Well, Denys! you never expected to see me, now, did you?" he exclaimed.

He seemed to feel quite at home, and accepted Mrs. Brougham's invitation to stay to tea with alacrity.

They had only just sat down, when Mr. Brougham arrived, much earlier than usual, as he was due at a big dinner.

He took a fancy to Charlie's open honest face at once, and while he drank a cup of tea before he dressed, he elicited the fact that he was on his way to a college in Scotland.

"I thought I might just as well break my journey here as in London," said Charlie. "Denys had talked so much about her home that I wanted to come awfully."

"You had better stay the night with us," said Mr. Brougham; "we can find him a bed,

can't we, mother?"

"Why, yes, of course," said Mrs. Brougham heartily, "there is Willie's bed always empty in the week."

"That's in my room," said Tony, importantly, "but I'd like you to sleep in it."

Charlie was quite elated. This idea of breaking his journey here instead of in London had come to him with the desire to see Denys again, and to say to her what, two nights ago, he had utterly failed to express upon paper.

But the most he had hoped to accomplish was a call, and perhaps an invitation to tea or supper, and he was established for the night, and already feeling as much at home as if he had known the whole family for years.

Mr. Brougham was so interested in talking to him that he forgot all about his dinner, and when the clock struck suddenly woke up to the fact that he had none too much time left to dress. Mrs. Brougham disappeared with him to help him put in his studs, Denys said it was Baby's bed-time, and carried her off to the nursery, and Charlie, with Tony as escort,

went off to the station to get his bag, while Gertrude, finding herself left alone, betook herself to the drawing-room piano.

By and by, Lizzie put her head in at the nursery door.

"Are you busy, Miss Denys?"

"No!" said Denys wonderingly, "Baby is undressed, and I have only to give her her bottle in ten minutes."

Lizzie glanced round the room.

"I might as well empty this bath," she said.

"Thank you!" said Denys, wondering still more. Then she remembered that she had promised to help Lizzie cut out a new apron. She supposed this was Lizzie's way of returning the help. Cutting out an apron was not a long job, but she wished her promise had been for another night, as Charlie had come.

Lizzie could whisk about on occasion. In three minutes the bathing apparatus was all away and the nursery as neat as a new pin.

A moment later the door opened again, and to Denys's intense amazement, Charlie's voice said—

"It's awfully good of you to let me come in

here."

"I never said you could come," said Denys blankly, "but you can," she added quickly, as Charlie hesitated with the door in his hand.

This then was what Lizzie had meant by asking if she were busy. and bv clearing up the bath!

"There was no one in the dining-room except Tony, who wanted to do his lessons, so I asked the maid if you were busy," explained Charlie.

He sat down in a low rocking-chair opposite Denys, and his eyes fell on Jerry's picture.

"Is that little Jerry?" he asked in a low tone.

Denys looked up at it too.

"Yes!" she said softly "it is just as he used to be."

But her eyes filled with tears. The sight of that sweet pictured face was too new and fresh for her to speak of it.

She went down to the hearth to move Maude's bottle further from the fire, that she might gain time to steady her voice.

Charlie, however, was in no hurry to talk.

The firelight shone on Denys's bright brown hair, turning it to red-gold, and softened her black dress, the familiar black dress which she had made herself, and in which he had first known her, and heightened the splash of color in her lap, the baby's fluffy yellow curls and white frilled nightdress, half hidden and half revealed by the scarlet dressing-gown that Denys had thrown around her.

This was a peep into a home life, such as he had never seen before. He would carry the remembrance of it as a precious remembrance, into his own new, untried life.

"That baby is awfully pretty," he said; "she would cry if I held her, I suppose?"

"Oh no, she wouldn't," said Denys, smiling at the compliment, "she would only think it was Conway. To see you sitting there seems to me like having my big brother back again!"

"I don't want to be a brother," said Charlie gravely. There was nothing unkind or disparaging to brotherhood in his voice, only an odd tone which took Denys suddenly back to

Gwyn Bailey's cycle party. How miserable she had felt that afternoon!

Charlie held out his arms for the baby, and Denys was secretly pleased at the canny way in which he took her and then sat rocking her, whistling to her and talking to her, just as Conway would have done. She thought his face had never looked so nice and kind as it did just then.

It seemed as if Charlie's thoughts, too, had flown back to the day of Gwyn Bailey's cycling ride, for when he had given back the baby, and her little ladyship was contentedly taking her supper on Denys's lap, he said abruptly—

"Do you remember something you told me that day we cycled with Gwyn Bailey?"

"What?" asked Denys, flushing nervously. Out of all the uncomfortable things that had been said that afternoon, which one did he want her to remember?

"We were sitting on the hill waiting for the others," said Charlie, "and you told me that, the night before, when you thought I was miserable, you had been praying for me. Do

you remember that?"

"Oh, yes."

She remembered again the odd tone of his answer, and her wonder if she ought to have told him.

"Will you go on praying for me, Denys? I shall need it as never before. There will be so many new things, and I shall be right away from anybody who cares about me."

"Except Christ," reminded Denys; "of course I shall, Charlie. I always do now," she added.

There was a moment's pause: then she said brightly—

"You won't feel so lonely after a little while. You will make new friends and be as jolly as possible."

"Perhaps," said Charlie. He had never expected to feel as homesick as he did to-night. "New friends are not the same as old friends!"

"But we might grow into old friends," said Denys, laughing.

"You!" he exclaimed indignantly, "why we *are* old friends. My mother and your grand-

mother have been friends for years. We inherit their friendship!"

"Mother says grandma is the faithful sort," said Denys, "and so is mother. I hope I inherit that too!"

"I think you do," said Charlie slowly. "Denys, you won't forget me, will you? I shall be working hard all these three years and perhaps I shan't see you often till my course is over. But I know I shan't forget you, for I am one of the faithful sort myself. And I want you to write to me pretty often, please. Will you?"

"If mother doesn't mind," said Denys, hesitating; "she does not like us girls to write too many letters. But I'll write as often as she thinks fit."

"I'll ask her about it; and I may write to you, mayn't I?"

"Oh, yes! and tell me all about your work and how you are 'keeping busy for Jesus Christ,' " said Denys eagerly.

"You will be making lots of new friends in this next three years," pursued Charlie, "it will help you not to forget me if I may

write."

Deny's eyes met his with a little reproachful look in them.

Little Maud had dropped asleep, and she gathered the scarlet wrap around her more warmly, and rose to carry her up-stairs.

"*That* wouldn't make any difference," she said. Charlie gave a sudden bright smile.

"I don't believe it would," he said.

CHAPTER XVI

"CHARLIE IS MY DARLING

"I say, Denys," said Gertrude, looking up from a music exercise book she was correcting, "Reggie Alston has met your dear Charlie Henchman down in Scotland."

"Has he?" said Denys, with interest. "Is he attending the College?"

"Oh dear, no! He has no rich uncles to pay for expensive training. The poor dear lad is in a bank. He met Charlie at one of the Professor's houses, I believe. He says Henchman is tremendously thought of for his work, and he likes him better than anybody he has met there. I should think Charlie had put himself out a good deal for Reggie, thinking he was lonely, or something. I didn't think

much of Charlie myself that night he came here. He isn't anything as to looks, not nearly so handsome as Reggie."

"Oh, no," answered Denys, very contentedly.

"He says Charlie is just going to leave College," pursued Gertrude, whose musical corrections only occupied half her mind, "but I believe Reggie's mistaken about that. It can't be three years since Charlie was here, and I am sure he said he was going for a three years' course."

"Yes, it is three years," said Denys; "he went just after I came back from that long visit to grandma's."

"I thought," said Gertrude, taking a fresh book from the pile beside her and contemplatively biting her pencil as she glanced down its pages, "I thought, that time he came, that he was going to propose to you. Denys, I was quite disappointed."

"Why?" asked Conway, curiously.

"You talk like Pauline Stacey," said Denys, displeased.

"Rubbish!" responded Gertrude. "Why was

I disappointed, Conway? Because Denys has a much jollier life of it than I do. She sits at home, and I have to rush in and out in all weathers and teach Harmony and Counterpoint to aggravating pupils—a good many of them *are* aggravating—and show them how to finger exercises and generally hum-drum along at music."

"If somebody had not been painstaking enough to teach you to finger exercises and all the rest of the hum-drum part, where would your grand diplomas and gold medal be?" said Conway. "You will get the advanced pupils later on."

"Humph," said Gertrude, a little mollified at the reminder of her triumphs.

"It's funny," said Denys, "but I used to think Gertrude was so fortunate with her future to look forward to. I did not think being at home was any future."

Mrs. Brougham looked up with a smile. "We talked about that the night before you went to grandma's," she said. "Do you remember about Moses's future, Denys?"

"What about Moses?" asked Gertrude.

"He had to do the hum-drum work of leading about a flock of sheep for forty years in the lonely, silent wilderness. Afterwards he was ready for the grand wonderful future for which God had been preparing him," said her mother.

Gertrude's pencil moved rapidly for a few moments. "Well!" she said, returning to the charge, "I am wondering if Charlie Henchman will come and see us on his way home. Reggie says he was as pleased as anything when he found Reggie knew us, and is never tired of hearing about us all. If he doesn't come here——"

Conway gave her a nudge under cover of the table; but, as he said to himself afterwards, he might have known that Gertrude would never take a hint.

"What are you kicking me for, Conway?" she demanded. "Mayn't I talk about a fellow I met three years ago, without being in danger of a bruised ankle? Keep your feet under your own chair, please."

"I'll take them into the drawing-room, thank you," said Conway, rising, "if you will

come and play my new song for me, Denys."

"Just as I was nearly done these horrid corrections and was going to the piano myself," muttered Gertrude, as the door closed behind Conway and Denys.

She bent all her attention on the work before her. There was a half-read letter from Reggie Alston in her pocket, and she might as well enjoy that while the piano was in use.

She pushed aside her books at last, and drew out Reggie's closely written sheets. Time hung heavily on his hands in the evening, and he and Gertrude had been chums for years.

"Henchman has an awfully simple way of looking at life," wrote Reggie. "He says it is just pleasing Jesus Christ or pleasing one's self. A question of love, he calls it. I am going to make a great effort and try and read a few verses out of the Bible night and morning, because Henchman says that is the way to find out what does please Christ. I wish you would tell me where you read, it would keep me up to it better, I think."

Gertrude paused. She was thinking how seldom she read her Bible now-a-days. She

heard it read at prayers in the morning and on Sundays, and she knew so many texts. There was no one at school who had as much scripture knowledge as she had.

Still, if Reggie wanted her to read the same as he did, she did not mind arranging it with him. There was no need to say she had not been doing it regularly.

She returned to her letter. "I shall miss Henchman terribly," went on Reggie, "but he says I can do just what he has been trying to do ever since he came up here. I can look out for the loneliest fellow I know and go for a walk or a cycle ride with him and get him to go to church with me, and think of him as I would of a brother of mine who was up here alone. And not be behindhand to speak of my best friend, Jesus Christ. He says fellows *want* Christ, but they don't like to let anybody know it, but underneath they are awfully grateful to anybody who troubles about them. Henchman says a school-fellow of his was converted, and wrote to him about it. He never answered the letter, but he always felt grateful, and when he wanted

to be saved and didn't know how to find Christ, he felt as if he could ask that fellow about it.

"But, oh, Gertrude, what a fag to take a fellow out walking and cycling, and generally hunt round after him, when, as likely as not, you have not six ideas in common. But I *am* selfish. I know I am. And I know what Henchman has done for me. I'm glad I was the loneliest fellow he knew. Good-night, old chum. It's bedtime. I am working like a nigger, and the Manager was quite complimentary yesterday. That ought to mean another rise in my salary. I'm saving up too. You know what for, don't you?"

Gertrude folded the letter. The drawing-room piano was silent, and there were voices in the nursery. Now was her turn. She rose and hurried in and began to practice for the school concert.

But in front of her sheets of music there floated these words of Reggie's.

"But I *am* selfish. I know I am." Gertrude knew that she was. You cannot live in a large family without hearing home truths about

yourself. They might be delivered with a little more kindliness, but they are salutary.

Gertrude knew the family verdict very well. To-night sitting at the piano she acknowledged its truth. She *was* selfish.

It was a question of love.

Did she love Jesus Christ at all?

And at that question her heart woke up and she answered herself. "Yes, I do love Him."

Her mind ran back over the years since she had first given her heart to Him. How little love to Him those years showed. How much love and consideration for herself. With her characteristic energy she decided then and there that, with God's grace aiding her, her life should be different. Jesus should be its centre from to-night.

A thundering double knock, a little bustle in the hall, followed by her mother's voice calling to Denys, broke in upon her thoughts. She ran out and found her mother smiling and holding a telegram.

"What is it?" came Denys's voice as she came from the nursery. "Who is sending you telegrams to make you look pleased, mother?"

"Charlie Henchman!" cried Conway, peeping at the signature over his mother's shoulder.

"Now, you be quiet, Conway," she said; "let me have a chance to read it myself."

"Have passed final. Coming up to London about position. Shall call to-morrow."

"Passed his final!" said Denys, flushing, "how splendid."

"That's very jolly," said Gertrude, with real sympathy.

"He seems pretty excited," said Conway, "he'll be lucky if he gets a post right off. Some fellows have to wait ages."

Charlie had not mentioned any time of arrival on his telegram, and a calculation of trains, worked out by Conway, pointed to the evening of the next day. So that Denys and Gertrude were proportionately surprised, when, as they sat writing in the dining-room early the next afternoon, the latest addition to a series of small maidens, successors to Lizzie, who had long ago departed to be a grand servant, suddenly opened the door, and unceremoniously told some one behind her to

"walk in."

And Charlie Henchman entered.

Taller, older, graver, Denys had time to see that as the two girls sprang up, but as he shook hands with Denys and his eyes met hers, she realized that this was no boy-friend who had come back, but a young man whom she hardly felt that she knew.

Murmuring something about finding her mother, she disappeared from the room, leaving Gertrude to do the best she could with the guest.

She ran up to her mother's room, and knocking gently on her door, called to her that Charlie had come. Then she went to her own room and stood by the window trying to still her beating heart and waiting till her mother should appear. She would not go down again till then.

Was this in reality the boy to whom she had written at regular intervals for three years, and whose letters to her had opened up such a wide new world?

Was this the boy whom she had pictured in her mind only last night, as liking to hear all

about them from Reggie Alston's lips?

And yet as she recalled the kindly, honest face which had looked into hers down-stairs, her thoughts suddenly flew back to a hillside, wrapped in white mist, out of which came to her—yes, it was—that same kindly, honest face. She remembered how she had thought then that the sun had suddenly shone out through the mist!

When she followed her mother back to the dining-room, Charlie and Gertrude were deep in the subject of Reggie Alston, but the conversation naturally turned at once upon Charlie's successes and plans and hopes.

He was very modest over his successes, but from what he said of the post he had come up to apply for, and in the light of Reggie's remarks, it was easy to see they had been considerable.

Mrs. Brougham offered him a bed for the night as before, but he said, regretfully, that he must spend the night in London, so as to be ready for his appointment at nine o'clock in the morning.

"If I might come back to-morrow, and tell

you how I get on," he said, "then I could stay the night. That would be very jolly. By the by, Denys," he added "I haven't seen the baby yet!"

For the first time since the minute of his arrival, Denys lost her shyness. Her eyes brimmed with merriment. "I'll fetch her," she said, "it is time for her to get up from her afternoon nap."

She scolded herself as she ran up-stairs for feeling so stupid and tongue-tied. Why, Gertrude, who was not Charlie's friend at all, was as natural and at home with him as possible! Would he imagine that she had forgotten him because she could think of nothing to say? Two hot tears burned under her eyelids as she bent over little Maude's crib and lifted her out.

"You must have on your best frock, Maudie," she said, "there is somebody nice down-stairs."

She dressed the child quickly and smoothed the pretty yellow ringlets, and the merriment returned to her face as she took the little thing in her arms as if she were indeed a baby again

and went back to the dining-room.

"Here's your baby," she said.

They all laughed at Charlie's face of astonishment at the change three years could bring the baby.

"Well—well!" he said, "who would have thought it! But you haven't changed a bit, Denys. You are just the same."

Denys flushed up with pleasure. She was glad that just then her mother suggested an early tea. She felt more at ease when she could move about, and help the little maid to prepare the meal and let her mother and Gertrude talk to Charlie.

But it was very pleasant to think that he was coming back to-morrow!

When Charlie returned from London the next day his face showed his tidings without any words. He had obtained the post, and it was an excellent one.

Once again Mr. Brougham was at home to tea, and as he talked to him of his college training and of his prospects, a sudden thought came to Charlie of his having gained that which had seemed to him at one time "the

whole world."

And then he thought of that other thing which had come to be "the whole world" to him, and as he glanced across at Denys's sweet, quiet face bent down over little Maude as she helped her drink her milk, a sudden trembling came at his heart.

What would Denys say to him?

But another thought came to him, and he rested down upon it. Those things had been the whole world to him. There was something greater, stronger, deeper, in his life than even his love for Denys.

"The love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

"God is love."

And into that Almighty Hand of love he had laid his life, for joy or sorrow, in this world, for everlasting joy above.

He would know whether it was earthly joy or sorrow when he could speak to Denys.

But the evening passed on, and he could not find a chance.

Gertrude occupied the drawing-room with a selection of music pupils, and Tony monopo-

lized the nursery with his lessons.

Tony would go to bed in due time of course, but Conway would be at home then, and what opportunity would there be of a quiet moment with Denys, who was wanted by everybody all the time?

But his opportunity came when Tony, on the eve of departure for bed, called to him to come into the nursery to see his bullfinch.

Denys was already on the stairs with Tony's light, and Charlie waited to intercept her as she came down again.

"I say, Denys."

Denys came in unsuspiciously enough. Tony was allowed his light for ten minutes, and she generally employed that time in tidying up the nursery, and putting out the things that would be wanted in the morning.

"Do you remember the last time you were in this room?" she asked.

"Yes!" he said, "I have carried the picture of this room in my heart ever since."

She glanced round the room as if gathering up the remembrance of it for herself. "Have you?" she said, wonderingly.

She stood by the fire, just where she had sat then, and Charlie went and stood beside her.

"Denys!" he said, "I want to say something to you which I have waited three years to say."

He paused a moment, then he went on softly, "I've loved you ever since I've known you. That day of Gwyn Bailey's picnic, when I told you I had heard from the Insurance Office, I made up my mind that I would work at *anything* that would give me a chance to make a home for you.

"And now I can make a home for you. Could you, do you think you *could* care for me?"

He had loved her and worked for her all this time!

The wonder of it was in her eyes as she looked up at him, and somehow the look that met hers dispelled all the strangeness and unreality which had hung over her since he came back.

She stretched out her hands to him impulsively.

"Could I? Oh, Charlie, I do!"

Some time later there was the sound of lively whistling in the nursery, and the strains of *"Charlie is my darling"* came floating out into the house.

"Oh you naughty, naughty boy!" cried Denys.

"But it's true, isn't it?" said Charlie, audaciously.